

COBALT-SERIES

谷

瑞恵

伯爵と妖精


「あいつは優雅な大悪党」

集英社


伯爵と妖精

Earl and Fairy

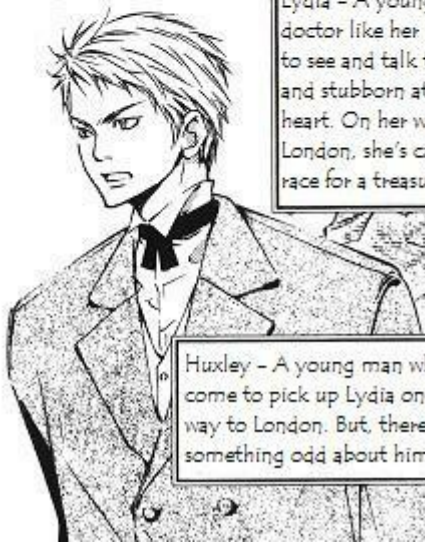
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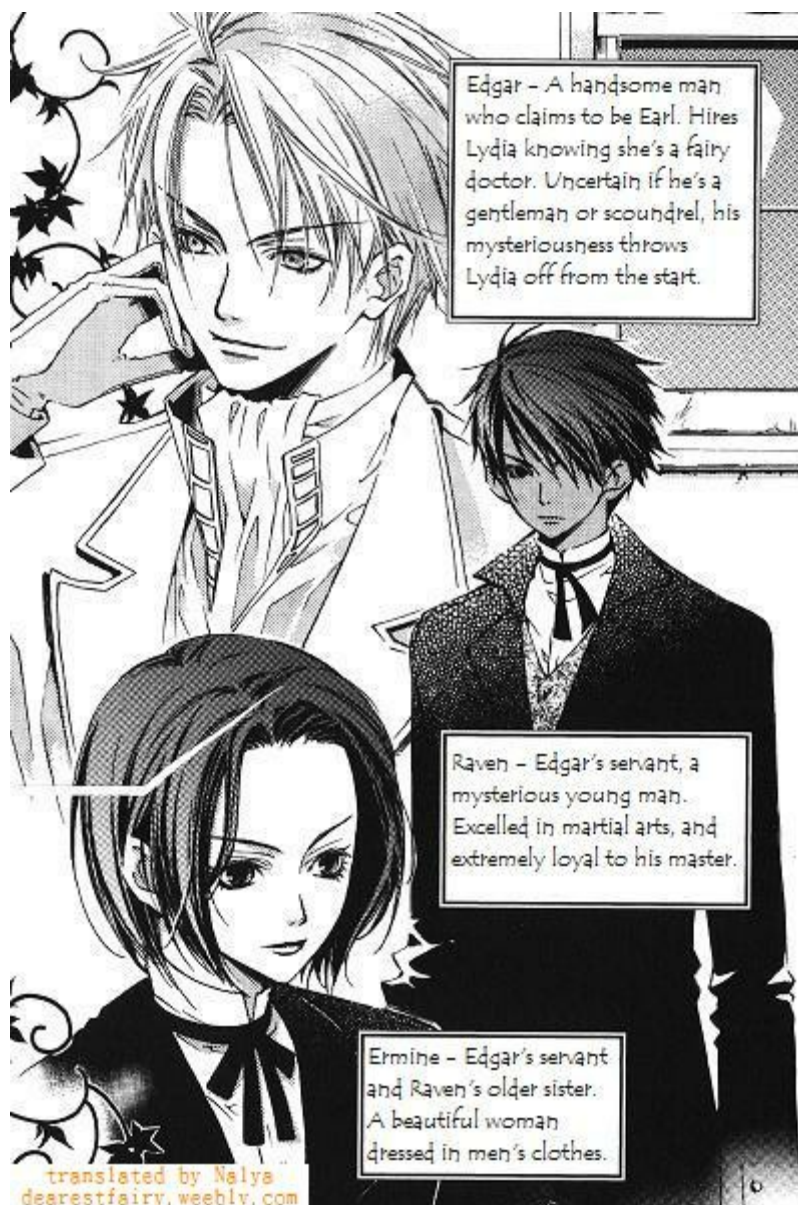
Nico - A fairy in cat form. Lydia's coward partner and childhood friend who is quite picky about his appearance and meals, and thinks of himself as a gentleman.



Lydia - A young lady aspiring to be a fairy doctor like her late mother. Has the ability to see and talk to fairies. She can be hasty and stubborn at times but has a generous heart. On her way to meet her father in London, she's caught up in a dangerous race for a treasure.



Huxley - A young man who had come to pick up Lydia on her way to London. But, there is something odd about him.....



Edgar - A handsome man who claims to be Earl. Hires Lydia knowing she's a fairy doctor. Uncertain if he's a gentleman or scoundrel, his mysteriousness throws Lydia off from the start.

Raven - Edgar's servant, a mysterious young man. Excelled in martial arts, and extremely loyal to his master.

Ermine - Edgar's servant and Raven's older sister. A beautiful woman dressed in men's clothes.

translated by Nalya
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Chapter 1 - Is he a gentleman or scoundrel

“So Mr. Gossam. How can I thank you for your hospitality?” said a young thin man smiling alluringly as he aimed a pistol at an old man with a proudly cut beard.

“Stop! I’ll pay as much as you want,” pleaded the old man in his scratchy voice, shivering his portly body that was tied to a chair.

“How generous of you. Then I’d like to ask one more thing, where can I get my hands on the legendary star sapphire ‘ Merrow’s star’?”

“That’s just a legend, it just comes out in a story, it doesn’t exist,” answered the old man whose name was Gossam.

The young man stood back, still with the pistol in his hand and slowly surveyed the room. “And I had this special stage set for you for this occasion, yet you’re not able to please me.”

Gossam was tied up to a large white laboratory chair. They were in a laboratory room that he used as a doctor in psychology.

The room was furnished with cupboards filled with beakers which had preserved human brains in them. All this time, it was Gossam who was the one heartlessly looking down at his human subjects tied up to this chair, but now the tables have turned. This young man was suppose to be for his next experiment, but now he had the weapon in his hand and ran his fingers along the scalpels on the table.

Gossam didn’t know anything about his young man’s past and bought him thinking he was another worthless, unwanted rat of society.

Gossam didn’t know the hidden background of this young man. This man's gestures were graceful even though his brilliant hair was uncombed and he wore tattered clothes, he still was so graceful in all his movements, like when his long fingers trailed over the beakers and as he slowly walked around the room. He stopped and turned to face Gossam with a powerful, silent gaze that made Gossam sink back into his chair in a superior presence.

He wasn't just some rat from the sewer. The one standing in front of Gossam was a powerful predator who finally was able to show its lethality.

This creature checked how weak its prey had gotten by slowly circling around Gossam.

And then he lifted up the pistol again.

He gave him a perfect smile that would have normally dazzled anyone but it made Gossam tremble in despair.

In perfect King's English, the young man spoke to Gossam in a voice dark like he was death itself: "Mister, I will be needing to take off pretty soon. It's unfortunate that the 'Merrow's star' doesn't exist. I'd wager this will be the last time I'll see you." He put his finger on the trigger.

"Wait! Wait!" bellowed Gossam.

It wasn't fear of death that made Gossam come to confess what he knew. It was an ominous feeling, that even after death, the devil hiding inside this man would come after him to make sure he fell to the bottom of the depths of hell.

"The only one who would know if the jewel is truly a legend or not, is a fairy doctor! Since, well, it's said that fairies are the ones who have the key to it, so only a fairy specialist would know how to find it!"

"A specialist in fairies? If it's a spiritualist imposter, aren't there plenty of them in the city of London?"

"...The demand for fairy doctors these days have depleted. There's barely just a few of them remaining in the outskirts of Scotland and Wales, but they're all old and more or less have one of their feet stuck into their coffins. Of course they would; the only ones who'd believe in fairies nowadays are children."

"But you're saying that knowledge, which is only for children, is what we need?"

"Yes, when it comes to merrows, pixies, silkies or whatever, they are the ones who would know *if they really exist*; who else would? None the less, it's a fairy doctor who knows everything when it comes to fairies."

"So, who is qualified for this treasure hunt? You say that they are all past their prime, but I respect you enough that you've handled everything and found someone - a fairy doctor - perfect for the job, am I right?"

Gossam could see that the young man had already saw through him and so,

gave in.

“Yes, I’ve found one. In a town near Edinburgh Scotland....”

The young man sighed beautifully like he was hearing about his long lost lover and his smile beamed as he listened. Slowly, the pistol was lowered, and Gossam sighed in relief. But in that next moment, from that dark laboratory, a gunshot echoed into the night.



Any inquiries regarding fairies are welcome.

Fairy Doctor, Lydia Carlton

A sign hanging in front of a house, written with that message, was inviting the laughter of today’s passer-bys yet again.

“Momma, do fairies really exist?” asked a boy passing by with his mother.

“That’s just a fairy tale. Of course they don’t exist.”

“No, they are real!” interrupted Lydia, jumping up from behind the bush by the sign, startling the mother and son during their conversation.

“Fairies are real, even if you haven’t seen one before. To prove it, before you go to sleep put a cupful of milk near your windowsill and then brownies will come to visit.”

She smiled down to the boy. But the mother snatched her child’s arm and pulled him down the road. After throwing Lydia a glare, she went out of sight. Lydia watched the mother and son go off as she lay her head on her hand, imagining how she was going to be called ‘abnormal’ or ‘crazy.’

“Lydia, it’s no use, how ever many times you repeat it, someone who hasn’t seen fairies will never see them. Nonbelievers wouldn’t believe it even if they were smacked on the head by one. So just let it be and relax,” said a long haired gray cat, resting on a branch of a tree.

This cat, who could talk and walk on its two hind legs, was Lydia’s friend. He always wore a necktie and was peculiar about how his fur needed to look by always grooming it to perfection, but the sight of him stretching up to stand and scratching around his bellybutton only looked like an old man in a cat-suit to Lydia’s eyes.

“Hey Nico, do you think there’s a way to make people understand what the job of a fairy doctor is?”

“That’s asking too much. The time when there were fairy doctors everywhere and being asked for help to solve fairy troubles that happens everyday is over. It’s the middle of the 19th century now.”

“But that doesn’t mean fairies are gone. They’re still live right next to people and do good and bad things; don’t you think it’s strange that everyone ignores them? Just because they can’t be seen, why does that have to mean they don’t exist?”

Just when she had her attention was focused on talking she heard a hesitant voice come from beyond the bushes.

“Pardon me...uh, mail delivery....” said a nervous young postman, reaching over the bush with an envelope in his hand. Her cat, who could disappear at will, was already gone.

Could it be that it appeared to him like I was talking to myself?!

“Uh, I wasn’t talking to myself. There was a cat here just now.”

Lydia tried to cover up for what looked like deranged behavior, but the postman only cracked a unsuccessful smile at her.

“No, I mean he isn’t a normal cat, he’s a cat that can talk....” No matter how much she tried, it only made her look more of a lunatic. On top of that, she noticed that some small fairies, brownies by the look of it, were playfully diving into the postman’s bag, and she couldn’t stop herself from shouting.

“Stop that! What are you all doing?! Stop playing pranks with those letters!”

When the brownies all dispersed, the bag, which was already packed full with letters, ended up making several of them to fly out onto the ground.

“I’m terribly sorry, brownies are terrible pranksters.”

She helped pick up the envelopes and handed them out to him.

The postman cautiously accepted them, and as if in a race, he dashed off down the road.

“Now there I go again,” she said, letting out a disappointed sigh.

Either way Lydia was already well known as the Carlton oddball and had no human friends. That was because she didn’t try to hide the fact that she could

see and talk to fairies.

By coming out about that and becoming a fairy doctor, she wanted to use this ability to help people, but at this point, all her attempts have ended as a failure.

“Now now, don’t cry just because you’ve scared off the new post boy,” said Nico. She entered the house to see that he was sitting on the sofa and spreading open the newspaper.

“It’s all your fault you know,” replied Lydia angrily.

It wasn’t that she had a fancy towards the postman, it was just that she spotted some of the town's young women, who were around the same age as her, talking to him in a delightful-looking, lively conversation. In such a country town, which had hardly anything new, just the arrival of a young man was enough to make the girls excited.

What Lydia hoped for was that if it was someone who didn’t know the rumors about her, then there could be a chance she could have a normal conversation with someone as a normal person, but now she just ended up introducing herself as a freak.

Lydia didn’t mind if she wasn’t understood by others or feel lonely. When she was little and growing up, fairies would be her playmates and fight with her. But now, she was seventeen years old, a young lady who was coming into the marrying age.

If she kept scaring off eligible bachelors, then it would become a serious problem for her one of these days.

“Hmmm, looks like there’s a criminal on the loose,” said Nico, quickly changing the topic by reading the paper. She wanted to show the townspeople the sight of this cat sitting on the sofa like a human, crossing his legs and holding the newspaper with his front paws. That way, they would realize there still were many unexplainable things in the world.

“The residence of a psychology doctor Mr. Gossam, was broken into by a burglar who caused major injuries to the owner of the house, then stole a large sum of the family's money and is currently on the loose.”

“Oh my goodness, why’s a crime in London on the newspaper of a country town like this?!”

“It’s because he’s on the run. Plus the victim’s son is looking for the criminal by putting out reward money. It says the thief resembles a serial murderer who has killed a hundred people in America. His age is around twenty and he has blond hair....”

A creepy portrait of the man was printed on the paper, but besides that, Lydia noticed something more important - a letter that had just been delivered.

“Look Nico, it’s a letter from father. He says I should come to London. He wants to spend Easter with me.”

“That’s rare. It isn’t even Christmas yet.”

Lydia’s father was her only remaining family, and was a professor in mineralogy and currently teaching in an university in London.

It had been a while since she received a letter from her father who loved to do research and thought it was a gemologist’s duty to research and classify every species and nature’s creation, and he would get so absorbed in his studies that he would spend his free time going off searching and collecting rocks.

“Are you going? London is a dangerous place.”

“That’s true. But there's nothing to worry about, even if I meet a thief, I’m not rich enough to steal from.”



Lydia’s mother was a Fairy Doctor. Before Lydia's mother married her father, she lived in an island up north and helped the town people with their fairy problems, and even though so many years have passed from the medieval times, she lived a life not so different from that time.

But that was merely twenty years ago.

Even though the islands were part of the enormous European empire and each had their own discrete cultures still remaining, Lydia had never visited her mother’s birthplace. By marrying her father, who was an outsider, she was told that her mother had left the island. Even if Lydia went to visit, she wasn’t going to be welcomed. Lydia remembered only a little bit about her mother, who had passed away when she was young, but amazingly, she still remembered the stories that her mother told her.

Knowing about the different species and characteristics of the fairies, each

species' rules, how to communicate and negotiate with them, this was the gift Lydia received from her mother.

That's why, just like her mother, she wanted to become a great fairy doctor. She didn't want to be embarrassed or hide the fact that she could see fairies. It didn't matter if she was called an oddball. As long as fairies existed, there was sure to be people who needed a fairy doctor's help.

Leaving the care of the family house to the house goblin, Lydia went with Nico to the harbor to get on a ship bound towards her father's residence in London. She left a sign in front of her house saying "Temporarily Closed." Although there won't be anyone who'd miss her absence.

There were numerous steamboats parked at the pier, the grounds were covered with stacked wooden luggage boxes and there was a busy crowd of passengers weaving through them. Her plan was to go abroad a ship and head to London. Nico, as if being an ordinary cat, was riding on top of Lydia's suitcase.

"Why don't you walk on your own. You're heavy."

"It's tiring to walk on all fours," he replied, purposefully meowing like a cat.

"Pardon me, are you Miss Carlton?"

Lydia stopped at the sound of her name. An unfamiliar man was smiling at her as he greeted her by tipping his hat.

"How do you do. My name is Huxley and I am an acquaintance of your father."

"Uh, so you're Father's colleague?"

"That's right, I work as his assistant at the university. I've come today to be the escort for the professor's daughter to London. Since it would be quite dangerous going to London by yourself, wouldn't it?"

He spoke courteously. He looked to be late in his twenties. At first impression, she saw him as a gentleman.

"Father had you especially come to escort me? Well that's quite abusive of him to use his authority over you like that."

"There's no need to worry. I had come to Edinburgh with business from the university as well. I had sent word to your residence, but it seemed that you were absent, so I was worried if we might miss each other."

Lydia thought that it was mighty thoughtful of her father. Besides his research, he was a easygoing, relaxed, child-like sort of man, someone who really couldn't be that considerate to others.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Huxley. By the way how did you know that I was the Carlton you were looking for?"

"A lady traveling by herself would easily catch anyone's eye."

That was true. And a young unmarried woman like Lydia wouldn't be so likely to go abroad a ship in the first place. Besides, being in a well-to-do social class and living by herself was unimaginable as a proper lady and so that labeled her as a freak even more, but it was useless to fret since the house maid didn't want to stay in that house for too long anyway. The resident fairies cause rackets at night.

"Actually, I only knew that the daughter's hair color was a rusty-ir... I mean, reddish-brown, so I had no trouble at all."

It seemed like he was about to say rusty-iron colored hair, which was how Lydia's hair was described as behind her back on a daily basis, and that description made her hair her complex, so she became a little sad and disappointed.

Just as he was nearly about to say, her rustic, reddish-brown hair was that sort of color, and she did feel a bit of a complex about that.

Maybe father had said something to him. Of course her father was someone who didn't notice such small details that ladies of coming age would worry about, so it was worthless to try to have him realize that and note it.

Anyway, Lydia rethought that there was nothing this kind gentleman had to be sorry about, and so she smiled. Even though he wasn't someone who complimented her hair particularly nicely, at this point Mr. Huxley thought Lydia was a normal girl. That was the reason he was treating her as a lady, and that should be enough.

But then, if she brought up the topic of fairies, would his attitude change? That was something she couldn't help but be curious about. He may not show any difference in his expression, but he would definitely think she was weird. Anticipating that, Lydia always ended up keeping a distance between herself

and others.

Whatever others think, I will always be me, she thought and pulled herself together, handing him her luggage.

He lifted up the suitcase with ease, which felt quite heavy for Lydia, and he started to lead the way so she followed him, but Nico whispered to her after he jumped down from the suitcase.

“Hey, are you going to trust him? It surely is strange for the Professor to be this well prepared, even if it’s for our sake, don’t you think?”

“Then what in the world would be his purpose be in meeting us? If he wanted to kidnap someone for random money, then he would have surely targeted someone more wealthy, wouldn’t he? Even if we were his target, our savings are used by Father, who is the type to spend it all on his research.”

Nico still seemed to disagree, but perhaps he couldn’t come up with a good reason to change her mind, so he went silent. And there was no reason to be worried, as Huxley headed straight to the steamboat that Lydia was planning to get on anyway.

The only unexpected thing was after she entered her room.

“Um, my ticket wasn’t supposed to be for such a nice room,” mumbled Lydia, in surprise. The room she was lead to was quite spacious, well-furnished and looked expensive.

“Yes, but it’s all right, the Professor had this room specially reserved. So please feel free to use it. I will be in the room next door, so if there’s anything you need, please let me know,” explained Huxley and left the room.

In the end, it seemed like there was nothing dangerous to be worried about.

“See, Nico, you were worrying too much.” Lydia fell back onto the large feathery bed. “It looks like there’s still time until the departure.” Just after she murmured that, she heard an unnatural noise come from the corner of the room.

“.....What?” The noise seemed to come from the closet, so she stood up and slowly tiptoed towards it. When she stood in front of it's wooden doors, she reached out with all her bravery and swung open both doors.

Empty.

Just as she sighed in relief, she felt the air move behind her.

A figure came from out of the shadows of the curtain, and covered Lydia's mouth with a hand, while grabbing ahold of her tight from behind.

She tried to struggle with all her strength, but couldn't move. Nico hissed at the intruder with the fur standing up on his back, but he was only a cat. He was useless.

"Help me. I beg you...." whispered the stranger, into Lydia's ear.

Help me?! That's what I want to say! she thought, still resisting.

"Please listen to me, quietly. That man..., the man who brought you here, he's a member of a criminal gang. If you stay here, you'll be in great danger."

Surprisingly, the male voice was calm and flowed gracefully from his lips.

Wait, Huxley is a villain?

When Lydia relaxed, the intruder must have decided she wasn't going to scream and released his hand from her mouth. But he still had a tight grip on her.

"What do you mean? Who are you?"

"I was captured by that man and was confined. I managed to escape and was hiding in this room. Then that man brought you here. He'll eventually realize that I've escaped. But you'd be in danger as well. That's why I need your help."

"You're not making any sense."

"There isn't any time. We need to slip out before the ship leaves port. I'll explain everything later. I can only say you have to trust me."



Lydia was finally released and she whipped around to face him. He was a slender man. His brown hair was ruffled and untidy and there was stubble on his face, but looking past his poorly-conditioned clothes, his face revealed that he was quite young, just around twenty. It was obvious that he was in a slovenly state, but mysteriously, his face still had an attractive allure to it. His eyes were strongly set on Lydia, and his sweet ash mauve eyes unnerved and confused her.

“If you’re caught again, what would they do to you?”

“I’ll be killed.”

The blood tinged marks left by rope on both of his wrists was frightening and much more convincing than his words. There were even some marks on his neck, like a knife was pressed against his skin.

“Did you notice how this room is at the end of the hallway? Huxley, well it may be his alias, but unless you pass by that man’s room, you can’t go anywhere. By doing that, he plans to confine you here. If you went outside, his brothers who

are with him will keep an eye on you. They are a sibling of eight brothers, and there are six of them on this ship, every one of them are muscular and strong, a group good at using force. Huxley is the eldest and they formed a gang to go against the law.”

He silently stepped over to the door.

“Even if you were to sneak out, there’s a string tied to the knob, so as soon as you turn it, it’s made to notify them in the next room. Most likely they would put you under sleep and get you off at any one of the next ports.”

Looking closer, there indeed was a shining, thin, transparent string connected to the door knob. That was all she needed. There was no need for a university assistant, who said he was asked by her father, to do this kind of thing.

Lydia folded her arms and stood in front of the man.

“So, how can we get out of here?”

Lydia took a deep breath as she stood in front of the door of Huxley’s room.

Since she opened the door of her room, Huxley should already know that she made it out to the hall. He could even be putting his ear to the door that was between them.

So she knocked on the door in front of her. After a brief moment, Huxley stuck his head out.

“Oh, what seems to be the problem, Miss Carlton.”

“Well, I’m hearing strange noises in my room. Like there’s something hiding in the closet... It’s really disturbing; could you please take a look?”

His complexion subtly changed. Huxley turned his neck to face into his room, probably to his brothers who were with him. “Hey, he’s in the next room. I’m sure of it.”

Oh please, well yes, you might be sure. They must have had no thought to spare about Lydia becoming suspicious about his brother’s sudden appearance and 'being sure' about him.

“Miss, it could be a criminal. It’ll be dangerous, so please wait here.”

In his room, including Huxley, there indeed were six sturdy-looking men.

After watching all of them enter Lydia’s room cautiously, the young blond man, who was hiding behind the hallway pillar, passed by the front of her door.

“Let’s go.”

He took her hand into his as if it was natural and Lydia was forced to follow him as he darted into a run.

“Nico, are you following?”

Nico, who was apparently staying invisible, replied by showing the tip of his tail with a wave.

“Hey, they’ve escaped!” The two of them heard a man’s yell. It seems they were quickly noticed, and Lydia heard the young man tut as he was pulled harder on her hand and they continued to run, flurrying down a flight of stairs.

Just as they were going down, one of the men jumped over the deck’s railing and landed down on the deck floor behind them.

The brother grabbed her bag, making Lydia let out a scream as she was pulled back.

The young man leading her, whipped himself around her, and with a kick, flipped the brother off his feet.

Still having his grip on Lydia’s bag, the man slammed into the railing and that force flipped him over, making him fall into the ocean.

“My bag....”

“Don’t look back.”

Lydia’s hand was pulled again, leaving her no choice but to follow. Passing through the deck, going down another flight of stairs, and running down the plank, they finally got off the ship, but he still didn’t stop and hurried, jostling through the crowd of people in the pier.

Even as she was out of breath and her lungs were tightening in pain, Lydia desperately thought only about keeping up with him. When they finally stopped, both of them collapsed down on the floor. She gasped to take in as much air she could, calming down the frantic beating of her heart, and when she finally felt her lungs relax, Lydia noticed that the floor she was resting on was very smooth and soft as a pillow.

I can’t believe how soft this carpet is.

She lifted her head up and slowly inspected the place around her; the room they were in looked like the interior of a castle, with expensive heavy furniture

and elaborate pieces of art and nicnacs.

“Where are we?”

“On a ship.”

Right next to her, the young man was still breathing heavy, lying on his back and had his eyes closed.

The scenery outside the window revealed the ocean. She could also see the pier.

They were indeed inside a ship, and in a completely different cabin room compared to the one she was in, and she gradually became worried that they might be reprimanded for entering this special guest room without permission.

“Excuse me, but we..”

“Sorry, but could you let me rest a bit.I’m pass my limit....”

Mumbling those last words, he closed his eyes, and no matter how much Lydia tried to wake him up, he didn’t respond, as if he lost one of his bolts.

There was nothing she could do, so Lydia got up by herself.

She couldn't come up with anything other than checking the inside of the room. There was a spacious living room, three bed chambers, an office, and a wash room and shower.

“Amazing....., who could imagine such a room could be on a ship.”

She didn’t leave the room, because she didn’t want the ship crew to find her, and from fear that Huxley and his men might be looking for them.

“This is smells fishy.” It was Nico’s voice. He eyed the large painting that was hanged on the wall, twitching his whiskers. “Who is that man?”

“Who knows, but, he saved us from being tricked.”

“I don’t know about that. We could be tricked by him.”

Could we be? Lydia’s muscles became tense and trembled. But, there was no mistake that the man who called himself Huxley was suspicious.

As an assistant working for an university, there was no reason that could convince her for needing that many large built men as bodyguards in the same room.

“I guess we have to hear his side of the story,” she said, sitting down on the leather bound sofa. Leaning down into the soft silk of the cushions like they

were a bed of feathers, Lydia felt the soft pull of sleep come over her.

“Hey, wake up, Lydia.”

She felt the wisp of Nico’s tail brush her cheek, flinging her back awake. It looked like quite some time had passed, as the sky had started to set, and the dark room was only lit by the light of an oil lamp.

She saw no sign of the man who had been sleeping on the carpet, and instead saw him through the open door of the washroom.

Their eyes met in the reflection of the mirror. Lydia’s eyes widened.

His hair, which used to be brown and disheveled, was now a shining gold. It looked like he shaved off his stubble, and he smiled back at her as he combed his fingers through his hair, his charm made him look like a different person.

“You’re awake. Your sleeping face was quite adorable.”

“...Uh-.”

“If your cat didn’t hiss at me, I would have wanted to watch you longer.”

Nico sat on one of the cushion, looking the other way feigning ignorance, scratching his ear with one of his back feet. Normally, he’d say he didn't want to act like a cat.

“More importantly, your hair-”

“Oh, I had it dyed. If it was my normal color, I’d stand out. But, either way, I ended up being found by his brothers.”

He dried his wet hair nonchalantly. The eyes, which peeked through the sheen of his golden hair were those same ash mauve eyes.

Still standing in that spot, he disgustingly stripped off his worn-out dingy shirt.

“You’re in the presence of a lady, my lord.” The one who said that was a darkly complexed young man. She guessed that he might be around the same age as her. But for that, he seemed overly calm and composed, a strange servant who didn’t even faint a smile.

But, wait, servant? And, my lord?

“Oh, excuse me. I guess my mind hadn't quite adjusted to this situation yet.”

The young servant was about to assist in putting on the new crisp clothes he brought with him, but had noticed his injuries.

“My lord, you’re wounded...”

“They’re just scratches. They’ll be hidden once I’m dressed, so I’ll just change as is,” he said, setting his hands on his servant’s shoulders.

“Don’t be bothered by this, Raven. There is no use in killing someone for this.”

Kill? Lydia arched her brow hearing such a disturbing conversation. Even for a joke, it wasn't funny.

“Yes, my lord,” replied the servant. But his expression wasn’t one that was humored by a joke or one that was mulling over if he should really kill the one who injured his master. He just closed the buttons on the shirt swiftly with his fingers.

“But, I was worried that you might not make it in time,” said the servant.

“Everything ran just as planned, Raven. I’d like you to meet Miss Carlton.”

“Wait, why do you know my name...” interrupted Lydia.

“The Huxley brothers were looking for a young lady named Lydia Carlton. So that must be you.” Then he suddenly stopped his servant with his hand like he remembered something, and walked over to Lydia. “I’m sorry, I haven’t introduced myself, my lady. I’m Earl Edgar Ashenbert. It’s a pleasure to meet your acquaintance.” He took her hand and kissed lightly on her fingers.

She looked back at him wide-eyed, which he returned with an amused smirk. Lydia snapped back to reality, and whipped her hand out of his hand.

“E-earl? You? ...I don’t believe it. I have need to go to London. If you’ll excuse me now.”

“You're too late. The ship has already left port.”

“What?!” She dashed over to the window, and sure enough, the port was a small dot far off in the distance.

“What is the meaning of this? This is kidnapping! And I left my luggage on the last ship, and I dropped my bag so I’m penniless, and we’re on this ship without a ticket, we’ll be caught as stowaways!”

“I’m shocked you thought of me that way. I promise to have you properly escorted to London. Once we’re done with business. I’ll have all your needs taken care of, and no worries, this is my cabin. I even have your ticket.”

“Then...you had the intention of taking me aboard this ship from the start? So being captured by Mr. Huxley, all of that was just an act?”

“That was real. I have no taste for cutting myself as an act.”

There were indeed cuts on his wrists and neck. Once she saw those vivid scars, Lydia lost her energy to assail him.

However!

“Getting captured seemed like the only way to meet you. Because, I didn’t even know your face or description,” explained Edgar.

Which means, he got captured on purpose?

“Then.., there would be no point in dyeing your hair.”

“Oh, that, that was so they wouldn’t think I had the intention of getting captured.”

Lydia felt dizzy, like she was about to faint. Completely confused, she forgot to ask him the important question about what his goal was.

“Raven, what time is it?”

“Almost seven o’clock.”

“We need to hurry, dinner is about to start. Oh, yes, you would have to get dressed as well. We’ve been invited to join the table of the Marquis and Marchioness Eugen. They’re nobles of Denmark, and the ones who invited me on this ship. Since you can’t board without a respected invitation.”

A ship that he could bring Lydia along, but Huxley and his brothers couldn’t step foot on. There was no chance that he happened to be 'coincidentally' invited on a ship that was moored at this harbor at such a perfect timing. He must of had his eye on this ship from the start and approached the Marquis and Marchioness to negotiate himself.

She began to tremble at the thought that perhaps, she might have been caught by an extremely dangerous man.

“You can’t be joking, Mister..”

“Please, call me Edgar, Lydia.”

Not paying heed to Lydia who glared back at him, he continued on in a good mood.

“Where's Ermine? Tell her to bring a dress for Miss Carlton.”

“Yes, I have it ready, my lord. Raven, that tie won’t go along with that cuffs color. Use this instead.” The one who entered with a dress and necktie draped

across her arm, was a woman dressed in a man's suit. She smartly wore pants that fit tightly around her waist, and wore a black coat just like the young male servant. Her hair was short, barely reaching her shoulders, and because she didn't try to hide the curves of her body, anyone could tell at first glance that she was a woman.

Lydia wondered if she a servant of his as well.

"My lord, which do you prefer?" she asked.

"Well..., I'll go with what you say. However, Ermine, that dress really isn't my taste."

"It's not as if my lord will be the one wearing it."

"I know that, but I'd like it more if the front was a bit more revealing."

"There is no need for vulgarity at the table. This suits my lady perfectly," stated Ermine. Even if she was a servant, it seemed like she had a more friendly relationship with him.

"Now, my lady, if you would please follow me," guided the female servant.

Lead into the bed chamber, Lydia was helped in undressing herself.

"Um, I can do this by myself," mumbled Lydia, who wasn't used to being assisted in dressing.

However, she ended up needing as much help she could get, as it was too much of a formal dress that she wasn't able to put on by herself.

She needed to be stripped of her regulars and put on a new corset and crinoline, and carefully slipped the dress on, paying careful attention not to damage the soft ribbons, laces and the fine beads adorning it.

"Now, let's dress up your hair."

She felt like she was treated like a little child.

Having Lydia settle down in a seat in front of a mirror, the beautiful Ermine smiled at her; she was an attractive piece of God's work, whose smile didn't make others feel inferior, only charmed by the sight of her. Her face was set firmly resolved and resolute, but she wasn't masculine at all. Even her short hair, which suggested her disinterest in flattering others, didn't impair her femininity.

Her white skin was spotless and smooth, her hair and eyes were a near black,

dark brown, her brows were set sharp and her red lips, like flower petals, was absolutely seductive.

Lydia looked at the reflection of herself in the mirror; she was a girl who no one could dare say had a beautiful, fair complexion, and her hair was reddish-brown, not the least bit eye-catching, and her yellow, green eyes were so uncommon that it made people nervous, afraid even. Her eyes and nose were nicely proportioned, and only her father would call her a beauty, but due to her impatient personality, it just gave her an even more stern look.

Add to that, she was an ‘oddball,’ so no one ever considered her as a woman. She understood that keeping her long and full hair down, even though she was already seventeen, was childish, but she couldn't weave or set her hair pretty enough, and besides, no one cared. So at least, the only coiffure that Lydia could manage on her own was to arrange it in a braid.

“Ermine, it’s time.” Said a voice from beyond the door.

“Right away, my lord, now, we’re finished.”

While she was busy being absentminded, she saw in the mirror that there now was a elegantly dressed, unrecognizable refined young lady looking back at her. But, that was during the brief peek she was allowed, before she was swept off her chair and lead back outside.

“Amazing, you look even more beautiful.”

“Stop joking.”

“Why? I also think that if you smiled, you’d look even more adorable.”

“What would I be smiling for?”

“For me.”

What’s wrong with this person. Lydia didn’t hide back the absurdness on her expression.

“...Now that I think about it, there is no need for me to accompany you to dinner,” she realized.

“Well, aren’t you hungry?” he asked, nonchalant.

That was true. She was. She only had one bite off a bread that was sold at the waiting area of the station at noon.

“I meant, that it would be more relaxing if I ate alone.”

“That is a waste, there’d be no opportunity for me to show you off.”

“Huh? I am not your accessory.”

“Of course, you’re the main attraction. I’m just serving as your foil. I guarantee they’ll like you. There are times where an inefficient escort can lower the value of a woman, but if all goes well, we’ll be able to show off each other much more attractively.”

So in the end, it’s all for your own sake.

Even though she felt rebellious towards him, she was led through the ship and brought to the door to the dining hall.

The doorman made a respectful bow and opened the door. She was led by his experienced lead but his lady’s first forced Lydia to step into the room.

“Like I said, Lydia. From this moment on, you’ll be showing me off. Remember that.”

That is quite an arrogant thing to say.

But he wasn't just bluffing.

In the grand hall, a wave of orchestra music greeted them. A chandelier sparkled above them, the silverware shined, and the jewels worn on the noblewomen glittered. At several tables, there were bursts of laughter.

Lydia was looking around nervously as she was smoothly escorted by Edgar who was, no objection, gracefully the perfect nobleman.

When he was dressed in that dirty outfit, his thin figure almost made him appear tired and weak, but once he put on an expensive tight-fitting evening coat, he seemed unassociated to worry or struggle, as it matched his graceful presence perfectly.

The tall, stiff white collar was turned up and tied with a cascade necktie. The buttonhole was a three colored violet.

His facial features showed both sharpness and sweetness, and his shining golden hair, was truly the ideal features of a nobleman that no one could meet that easily.

What Lydia was feeling must be the same thought that anyone would imagine who had met him. As a young Earl, Edgar dazzled, not only the elderly Marquis and Marchioness husband and wife, but the other extravagant sounding named

members at their table.

And as for Lydia, who was introduced as his friend, didn't have to pay them any extra attention, but was allowed to silently enjoy the dishes that were set on the table.

According to Edgar's story, Lydia grew up in Edinburg with her grandparents, was a respectable young lady who offer her efforts in charity works and was on her way to Leeds to attend a childhood friend's wedding.

Her strict father wouldn't allow a young woman to go on a short trip, but apparently, after Edgar offered her escort her there and back, he finally agreed.

It's amazing how all of this is just pouring out of him.

"I'm so impressed; the Earl is truly dear to one's friends."

"If its to win the attention of a beautiful friend, then anyone would become eager to offer. Isn't that right, my lord?"

"I'm glad you'd understand. But, unfortunately, she only allowed to me to be a friend all this time."

We only just met today.

But, the young man's performance of sincerity was able to win a positive impression from the Marquis husband and wife, who were gazing at the Earl like he was their grandson, and the other older crowd of people as a pure, child-like adorable young man.

"Well, that is such a waste," said one of the women.

"An ocean cruise is a good chance to get away from one's old routine, if it's on the waters, then any kind of women would feel the romance, don't you think so, young lady?"

"Is that so, Lydia," said Edgar.

Being spoken to with such kind voices, it felt slightly new and strange for her, since she felt like she really was accepted warmly among them.

"...I wouldn't know."

It did feel quite satisfying, but half of it was frustrating, but Lydia still replied friendly, which he replied with a sad shrug of his shoulder.

He must be well aware that only added to collecting the warm sympathy of the people around them.

“As one in a position trusted by her father, it’s unfortunate that I cannot court her any further.”

She was viewed as a self-restrained and reserved girl who was sought after by the handsome, young Earl. Edgar had presented Lydia like she was a saint.

So this is what he meant by showing him off.

Just sitting beside him, she received the envious gazes of the young women and daughters from other tables.

But that was meaningless to Lydia. Even if this situation was enjoyable and comforting, Edgar obviously wasn’t her friend; it was all a sham, like she was just embellished with fake jewelry.

Then, what was Edgar’s purpose in fabricating her as his feigning female friend. He did seem like he was just playing a game, but if this were a game, then that would be putting himself on the board as one of the pawns. A being who was worthless and meaningless once off the board.

Was it true that he’s an Earl?

“Oh, now that I recall, Earl Ashenbert, I heard that you were the descendant of the noble, legendary Blue Knight.” The one who asked was the man who was sitting at the edge of the table. He was the one that was just now in a heated debate about Chaucer.

“To say famous would be an exaggeration. For most of the British people, the Blue Knight Earl is just another fictional character like Hamlet. And not even as well known as him.”

“Oh so did the Blue Knight Earl truly existed? I have read F. Brown’s book and it certainly was a wonderful story.”

Of course even Lydia knew about the story of the Blue Knight Earl. Surprised at hearing the unexpected news that Edgar was the descendant, intrigued, she inclined her ear to their conversation.

The scholar began his interpretation of the reading to the curious noblewoman.

“Yes madam. The model of the character was a knight who pledged his loyalty to Edward I. He was led the attack against the crusaders along with the king from when he was still the crown prince. He said he was from the fairy world and spoke of various adventure tales about foreign countries which fascinated

everyone... Brown's writing depicts the work of the Blue Knight Earl's fairy servants as trustworthy and helpful and was completed as a mysterious fantasy novel. But, aside from the fairy servants there indeed was an advisor of Edward I called as the Lord Blue Knight."

Edgar remained silent, smiling softly and nodded, letting the scholar talk as he pleased.

"It is true that the Lord Blue Knight was granted the peerage of Earl of England by Edward I. Don't you think that being the ruler of the fairy world and by pledging his loyalty eternally, the King of England would become ruler of the imaginative land of the fairies reflects typical English sense of humour.

"You're wrong. Lord Blue Knight really was lord of all good fairies." Lydia couldn't stop herself from stating her truth.

All eyes at the table focused onto her. Oh no, I'm going to be laughed at again. Even though she knew that, she couldn't stay silent after being offended by the scholar's story.

"Um...because, Sir, if you say that you believe in the existence of Lord Blue Knight, then why do you arbitrarily decide the fairy world is a joke? Both of their stories have been passed down together, it's wrong to say one is true but the other is a fabrication."

"Young lady, the fairy part is too absurd but since document papers exists stating that a peerage was given to Lord Blue Knight, then there is no doubt of his existence."

"Yes of course. But in those papers it should have written about Lord Blue Knight with his other name, as Earl of Ibrazel. In Gaelic, Ibrazel means the legendary fairy land beyond the sea. Making it true as well. Do you think that the people of the time thought of the fairy land as a joke?"

Edgar smiled back sweetly.

Could he have helped me?

The eyes of the group that were looking at Lydia skeptically, quickly unraveled.

"That's true, people in the past didn't seem not to believe in the existence of fairies and demons. Edward I must have believed as well. Then, I would like to ask the Earl himself. Do you have your fiefdom in the fairyland?"

“Of course, it was passed down to me from the previous Earl.”

By easily replying like that, they accepted that response merely as British sense of humour.

“Oh, I would really love to pay a visit.”

“The rule in the family is that the only one I am allowed to take with me is my bride.”

“Oh my, if a woman was persuaded with that then I would understand how Ms. Carlton would not want to believe in the land of the faeries.”

“So that means I can still be a little hopeful?” Edgar glanced towards Lydia again with warm, nurturing eyes.

A conversation that was taken as a joke out in the open. But a strange time where no one makes denials about fairies.

Like a little game of make-believe.

With just a little help of Edgar’s art of conversation, Lydia wasn’t made fun of or and was watched over with warm eyes.

Her dull reddish-brown hair, that she couldn’t come to like herself, was envied and complemented by how it didn’t frizz and her green eyes that made her look like a witch or vamp was compared like a Peridot.

She became intoxicated by the high-quality spirits, the sparkle of the chandelier, and the smell of perfume.

Lydia absently thought about the human lord of the fairies, the descendant of the Blue Knight Earl might possibly empathize and accept her.

“I feel like I’ve heard a lifetime's worth of praises,” mumbled Lydia, as she refreshed herself on the deck from the breeze of the wind.

The sea was dark, and nothing could be seen. The white foggy smoke from the steamship floated up and covered the moon.

“This is absolutely ridiculous, those lousy servants, they served me milk in a bowl. What am I, a cat!? Who would drink from that?!” Nico, a gray-haired cat no matter who looked at him, was sitting arrogantly on a deck chair gulped down some scotch. There was a side dish of fried fish beside him.

“Hey, Lydia, could you make sure and tell them to bring a decent meal tomorrow morning, I want pancakes, bacon and hot milk tea.”

“You say it yourself, you can talk just fine.”

He tutted annoyingly. “Even if I said something, a normal human would just pretend like they didn’t hear.”

Well, anyone wouldn’t want to admit that a cat would talk.

“So, what was that man’s objective?”

“I haven’t asked yet. But, he claimed to be the descendant of the Blue Knight Earl. Maybe it’s something related to that.”



“The Blue Knight Earl...., if I recall, wasn’t that the legend about having rule over the fairyland? Which means the Earl Lord wants your help as a fairy doctor.”

Could that mean, he might already know that Lydia calls herself a fairy doctor? But, with a head just barely awake from the spin of alcohol, she couldn’t think of him as the ruler of the fairyland and someone who’d understand her. He looked like a more practical person, a tactician type.

“But, hey, I still think it’s best we don’t get involved. That Huxley man and the Earl Lord is fighting against each other, right? Did you see both of them, trying

to pretend to be lady-killers or something! At their level, it's just embarrassing."

"I think Edgar is actually quite handsome."

"Thank you." The voice from behind was the person in question.

She said her opinion without really thinking very hard about it, but she didn't imagine that she would be heard by him, so Lydia couldn't help from blushing.

"Uh, no, that was, I was just simply repeating the general opinion! So, it's a completely different matter if I have any good feelings to you or anything!"

"Yes, of course. I'm the one who forced you to come aboard this ship, so I don't have any hopes that it would be so easy for you to open your heart to me. By the way, who were you talking to?"

"Huh?well, that's"

She sneaked a peek at Nico. He had already curled up like a cat.

"Is it strange? Talking by myself with a cat." Lydia was only left to take a defiant attitude.

"Why? I think it's marvelous that you can communicate your feelings with animals."

There is no way you think that way. But then again, Edgar didn't show the slightest bit of banter in his expression.

Only that he must have noticed the glass of scotch that was by the deck chair that Nico was laying on.

"Were you having another drink? Did you get tired after all?"

I said that I was just a little dizzy so I'd go get a breath of fresh air and left the table, but when he said it like that it makes me look like a drunk.

Becoming embarrassed, and angry at Nico who was feigning indifference, Lydia's temper burst and she blurted out "It, it wasn't me, it was Nico drinking. He drinks whenever he wants, he has no manners and bad behavior, on top on that, he's a picky cat with his taste in neckties and his shiny coat, and complains that he can't drink milk out of a bowl, and wants pancakes and bacon and milk tea for breakfast, he says nonsense like this all the time!"

As you would expect, Edgar was looking at Lydia wonderingly.

I knew it, even for someone like him, who says he's the descendant of the Lord Blue Knight, I'm just an oddball freak. Noticing that, she signed.

“If it’s funny, you can laugh you know. I don’t know what you wanted me to do, but as you can see, I’m strange. Just let me get off at the next harbor...” Lydia stopped in the middle of her words because he suddenly stepped up next to her.

With his ash mauve eyes, he calmly gazed down at her. They were so close she could clearly see his blond eye lashes just with the lamp light.

“Wh...what?”

“I was told that fairy doctors can see what others can’t see, and hear what others can’t hear. It is true, your eyes, those light green eyes seem like they can see through the mysteries of the world.”

So he did know that Lydia was a fairy doctor.

“You’re over exaggerating. I’m really not that big of a deal.”

“No, if you bring in the light, your irises shine like a golden flower. It makes you more mystical.”

That part of her eyes was what made others call her a witch, but having them complimented for the first time, Lydia was honestly caught off balance.

“...More importantly, are you really the descendant of the Lord Blue Knight? Then wouldn’t that mean you can also see fairies? If not then you won’t be able to go to your land.”

“Is that so. But the ability that my ancestors had to cross worlds, and the power to talk to fairies, all faded through each generation. The only thing I inherited was the title of Earl. My father and grandfather, and one before that, all traveled the world and lived overseas. I finally came back to England, but even if I wanted to greet Her Royal Highness, I don’t have the jeweled sword given to us by Edward I that is my proof to become the Blue Knight Earl.” As he spoke, he closed the distance between them, so Lydia was made to slowly step backwards.

“Je-jeweled sword?”

“Julius Ashenbert, an earl of my family from 300 years ago, hid it in one of his lands and left on a long trip and died. The hidden location is only explained by a riddle, protected by fairies is what I’m told, and to get there are several fairy related steps, so for someone like me who wasn’t born with that power, it’s all

incomprehensible.”

“The land you speak of, is it the Fairy Kingdom?”

“My family has land and castles even in the human world. Land given along with our peerage, others given as thanks for our services, and ones that were given to us by others.”

“And that’s why you need a fairy doctor..”

“But that’s not the only problem. There are others who are after the large star sapphire that adorns the jeweled sword.”

“Those others, you mean Mr. Huxley from before?”

“That’s right, the man who tried to kidnap you. He doesn’t know about the treasured sword being proof of the peerage, but as I’m also after the sword he is malicious towards me. If I were to die the line in the Earl family would end. I need to find it before it’s taken and make clear of my position in the Earl family. Lydia, will you please help me.”

Lydia took yet another step back, but felt nothing but air beneath her foot and lost her balance.

I’m going to fall. She realized she was by the stairs.

In that second, Edgar’s arm wrapped behind her back and grabbed her. She was strongly steadied and pulled back up to him. Lydia instinctively held on.

“Be careful, it’s dark,” he uttered with a sigh.

She had never been this close to a man besides her father.

“L, let go of me.”

“If I do, you’ll fall.”

She couldn’t help but think that he was having fun that she had to hold onto him.

“.....Enough of this already!”

Just like with the lightness in a dance, he adroitly turned around as he held her.

Placing her back away from the stairs, he let go of her slowly, as if in regret.

Lydia was glaring at him, but he only returned a fearless smile. He must think there was no woman he couldn’t get what he wanted from.

How offensive.

“In my opinion, I don’t believe that you’re really the descendant of Lord Blue

Knight. I don't have any intention of helping an imposter get his hands on Lord Blue Knight's jeweled sword. So I--"

"Refuse? Then do you plan to swim home from here?"

"Are you implying that you're going to throw me into the ocean?" Nervous, Lydia quickly stepped further away from him and the railing.

"I wouldn't dare, I'm not such a cruel villain. Only that, I do want to warn you. It will be difficult to head home from the next harbor or to London when you're penniless. Furthermore, Huxley and his brothers are desperately looking for you right now."

That meant Lydia had no choice in the matter.

There was no doubt she was being threatened. She thought he surely was a cruel villain.

He slipped out a key from an inner pocket of his coat.

"Your room. It's on the same floor across the hall from mine. Please use it as you like."

After handing it to her, he disappeared into the dark hallway.

Chapter 2 - Sir John's cross

In the 16th century imperial court of Queen Elizabeth, there once was an Earl called Lord Ashenbert. He claimed to be the descendant of Lord Blue Knight, and was an adventurer, who traveled all over the world, and told strange and wonderful anecdotes that he saw and heard to all the people gathered at the court. From all of his stories, a listener gathered and wrote down just the stories about his ancestor Lord Blue Knight, which is said to have been the origin of the book 'Lord Blue Knight – Traveler from the fairyland' by F. Brown. Lydia knew very well about this book.

It was one of the very many stories that her father read to her after the death of her mother. She remembers her father saying that this is a true story. Of course, for Lydia who knew about the existence of fairies, she didn't dare doubt about it.

She only struck with admiration that there would be clans who could acknowledge a human as their ruler when there would be a fairy king in a land where fairies ran it.

A book that modeled after Lord Blue Knight who was said to exist, most likely that was the part of the book that everyone believed to be real and naturally the fairy part was fiction.

But Lydia thought that there was nothing unreal about any part of the wonderful, magical story in this book.

Information about the treasured sword Edgar talked about is also available in this story.

In the last chapter, there is a scene where Lord Blue Knight leaves from Edward I. He says that he will return to the fairyland. To the king who asked if he will return to his court, Blue Knight replied "Of course if your majesty calls for my service I will come no matter where I am. I am forever your majesty's humble servant. But the fairyland time runs at a different speed than the human world. A year over there may be a hundred years here, then again, spending some ten

years and aging old could just be a few days worth here. So I ask that your majesty, any time I, or any one of my descendants returns to you, please be able to know that we are who we are.” Then the King gave his sword to Lord Blue Knight. In the name of Edward I, no matter when it shall be, the King of England will welcome the one who is proved to be the Earl Blue Knight.

After that, it was said that a number of the heirs of Lord Blue Knight had appeared in the England royal court.

Out of those, one of them must have met Mr. Brown who wrote the story of Lord Blue Knight.

And now, Edgar was that descendant.

The thing that he is trying to get his hands on is the treasured sword of Edward I, proof of his position as Earl.

Finding that was the job that was offered to Lydia as a fairy doctor.

“Well I guess that’s alright? Why don’t you help?” Nico was in an unusually good mood this morning. That being because a breakfast meal of pancakes and bacon was properly delivered to their room.

“Hey you, weren’t you talking yesterday about how suspicious he was.”

“But unless you don’t do it, you’re going to be thrown out penniless into an unfamiliar place.”

I wonder if that threat was serious.

“But even if I help, it won’t guarantee that we’ll find the treasured sword.”

“Just take it as money paid in advance. You’d better make sure to get your worth. Oh, but there’s always the idea of going on the run after getting the money,” said the carefree, irresponsible cat, tying a napkin around his neck and arrogantly used a knife and fork to carry a slice of bacon into his mouth.

If one was going to charge money, then that person must be responsible and work for it, that’s was a job was. But Lydia was undecided because she wasn’t sure if Edgar was the real heir to the treasured sword or not.

Though, as Nico says, unless they don’t run with the money, it would be difficult to refuse helping them.

“I have to write to father.” Lydia took out some paper and an envelope that was set in the desk by the window.

“Dear father, it seems that I will be arriving in London later than I was planning. A gentleman called the Earl Ashenbert has offered me a job regarding fairies. He says he’s the descendant of Lord Blue Knight. I don’t know if he really is, but it looks like he won’t release me unless I finish the job.”

She wondered if she should write about how she was nearly imprisoned by a man named Huxley, but decided that it would only worry him and didn’t write it.

“Anyway, please do not worry about me. Take care of yourself, so long.”

After signing her name and closing the seal, there was a knock at the door.

Edgar came breezing in. He said good morning with a crisp and cloudless smile. His blond hair shined in the bright morning sun. He seemed so perfect that she began to feel jealous and wondered if God patronized him too much?

“What is your business?”

“I thought we should discuss our plans in what we should do from now.”

He came in arrogantly like this was his room and sat down on one of the sofas. His foreigner servant that trailed in after him stood by the door and didn’t move. Nico had already finished his meal and because he was stretched out on the cushion, Edgar wasn’t able to witness his rare eating situation.

“First, would you look at this.” Edgar laid down a coin on the table near him. Lydia sat down on so as to face across him, and picked up the coin in her hand.

“An old gold coin.”

“The Earl family coat of arms is on it. And can you see that there’s something written on it? According to our family, it’s writing that was inscribed by fairies.”

“It’s so small I can’t read it.”

“Even though you’re a fairy doctor?”

Lydia was ticked off by the comment. “You know, you can just look at it through a magnifying glass. When it comes to the talk about fairies, people might see this as mysterious and then they’d expect I’d use some magical powers and poof! The problem would be solved, but a fairy doctor’s weapon is their knowledge about fairies and negotiation skills. I am not a wizard.”

“I understand. So, this is a photo of it through a loupe. Can you read it this time?”

Lydia was briskly handed the piece of paper, and she overtly scowled.

He could have just took this out from the beginning.

On top of that it revealed that there was some collection of twisted letterings with a little quirk in them, but if you look at it without being wrapped up by the fairies and so on, then you could immediately notice that it was alphabets.

“...This is unmistakably English writing. Are you testing me?”

“I don’t know your capability. In society there are people who take advantage of others claiming that they cannot see what they see, and talk about how only they know about ghosts and fairies and visions of the future. However, you don’t connect it with the something obscure and unaccountable, and just because I am not able to understand it, you don’t seem to be the type to give a vague answer. Just being able to find that out should be a plus for both of us, isn’t it?” He said plainly, as if nothing.

Lydia scowled even further. But it was annoying that she was underestimated.

“So, then, my lord whose the descendant of Lord Blue Knight but can’t see fairies, then do you believe that it was truly fairies that inscribed on this?”

“This was inscribed by humans. If it is at the least of this level of detailed work, then it isn’t something that a human can’t do. It doesn’t serve as evidence that fairies exist.”

“So you’re saying that you’re someone who fundamentally doesn’t believe in fairies. And yet, you believe in the existence of the treasured sword that’s protected by fairies, and going to have that searched by a fairy doctor who you don’t know if she’s a fraud or not?”

“The sword of Lord Blue Knight itself only has a historic origin and doesn’t have any mystical about it. The issue is where it’s hidden. Fairy names are used as the words to guide us to its location. Lydia, you said that a fairy doctor’s weapon was their knowledge about fairies and negotiation skills. I just want that knowledge. I don’t need any magical powers. I just want you to be able to understand what the words inscribed on here mean. Would it damage your pride for someone like me who doesn’t believe in fairies to ask for the help of a fairy doctor in order to get that?”

Faced with his challenging stare, there was the urge inside of Lydia that built up,

of wanting him to admit his wrong and accept her reason. The reason why fairy doctors were needed from long ago.

The bond between the fae and humans was so strong that just knowledge couldn't unravel it.

"Edgar, unless you don't ask more than just knowledge from me, then you won't get your hands on the treasured sword, you know."

"How reliable! Then would you first read this."

Taking a breath, Lydia took the piece of paper handed to her.

"[The green jack from spankie's cradle. A dance with the pixies on the night with a moon. Beyond the silkie's cross. The maze of the pooka.]What is this?"

"That's what I want to know."

Just like those first riddles, there was more of it using other fairy names. Without stopping, Lydia decided to run her eyes through all of it.

"....[Exchange with the Merrow's star. If not, the merrow will sing their song of lament.] ...Is this all of it?"

"The merrow's star is most likely the star sapphire that's on the treasured sword," replied Edgar.

"So, then, this last part is that important part related to the treasured sword. I wonder what the [exchange with a star] means," mumbled Lydia.

"I don't know about that either, and the rest of it."

"I'm pretty sure that the first half of it is hints of the hidden location, but where are the estates of the Earl family? If we don't go there, then I can't say anything definite."

"My family has lands and buildings all over England." Edgar spread out a map. There were red x that marked various places on it.

"Where shall we start?" asked Lydia.

"I want to know that too."

Lydia was stumped. If they were to fine comb through each one of them, then that would take an exhausting amount of time. And yet this man shoves this to her repeating that he wants to know.

Well of course, from they're point of view this is a job they offered to Lydia.

A job, mumbled Lydia.

In the end, it looked like she was left with the option of accepting it.

But if she looked at it positively, then it was an unusual job offer that was decent.

If she wanted to become a profession, then she shouldn't be hesitating at a time like this, and as Lydia felt desperate she stirred up her fighting spirit.

Maybe there is a hint of which estate it could be in that riddle.

She ran her eyes across both the map and memo and realized something about the names.

"Well, it seems like it uses a lot of fairies from Ireland."

"Oh, really? But, my family doesn't have any estates or castles in Ireland."

"And merrow is what people in Ireland call mermaids, but if this points to where the sword is, then it might be somewhere close to the sea."

She trailed the west side of the coast that was near Ireland. There was one mark by the coast connected to the Irish Sea.

"Ah, what about here? Manann Island. If it's an island, then it should have one or two legends about mermaids."

"Then let's start from here."

It looked like she was going to take the long way around to get to London.

"For your information, I don't work for free. You'll going to have to pay me up front."

"Certainly. How much?"

Now that she thought about it, she never really did have a decent offer for a job up till now, and so she realized that she hadn't really decided on an exact wage for her services.

But if that were to leak out to him then he'll underestimate her, so Lydia desperately put on a poker face.

I'll be disparaged if I make it too low. Daringly, she showed all five fingers on her hand in front of Edgar.

"Raven." Edgar called for his servant, without a single opinion to Lydia's demand.

Raven swiftly left the room without waiting for instructions and immediately

returned with. Of course in his hands was an ebony tray with a cheque on it. Right in front of Lydia, Edgar signed the cheque. When she looked at the cheque she was handed, Lydia shut her mouth before she nearly yelped in surprise.

“Is that enough?”

She thought she was overcharging an exorbitant of 50 pounds, but 500?

If she was just thrown such a fortune so lightly, she in turn became embarrassed and couldn't correct the misunderstanding.

“That seals the deal. I'll be expecting highly of you.”

Just when Edgar stood up from the sofa, for the first time Raven opened his mouth to Lydia.

“My lady, would you like me to send out your mail?”

It seemed he spotted her letter on the desk. He surely is a servant quick to notice. If it was in a normal situation, Lydia would think that, but for that place and timing she immediately sense a unnerving shift in the air.

Raven had realized that Lydia was trying to contact someone beside them and purposefully asked her so that Edgar would hear.

“It's alright. I'll send it out myself.” She hurriedly replied, but she knew that Edgar sent a sharp glance at the envelope.

“A letter to who?”

“...To father. I wanted to write to him to let him know I'll arrive late to London. Is that bad?”

“It'll be bad if our location is leaked out. Huxley and his men may go on ahead of us.”

“I'm just going to tell him that I'll be late.”

“Just that will make it apparent that you're helping me. Please understand Lydia, once you have agreed to our contract, I am your employer. All secrets must be confidential, and I'd like you to follow my instructions.”

He didn't say it in a harsh voice, but there was a force in it that didn't allow any objections.

He was used to others serving him. With his placid eyes and dignified voice, and his straight but powerful posture, he had everything imaginable quality of a high class noble, that it made his words sound undeniable.

Still feeling a faint urge to retaliate, Lydia remained silent.

“I apologize for being unreasonable. But, Lydia, please don’t inconvenience me too much. That would be in the best interest for you.”

She wondered if she were to secretly send out her letter, then would she be thrown into the sea? His calm voice gave her that frightening idea.

A peculiar mix of calmness and frightening.

The only thing Lydia understood was that, in the end, she was in the same situation as when she was prisoned by Huxley.

She didn’t know she if could compare which man, Edgar or Huxley was the better the two evils for her. But she was sure that Huxley was a man easier to read.

Her letter to her father was still left on the desk, and the reason they didn’t confiscate it was probably because he was confident she wouldn’t mail it out. To prove it, Lydia didn’t have the strength to want to.

The loyal servant wasn’t just a simple servant to Edgar but also a smart right-hand man. But Lydia saw the two of them had a much stronger bond than that, like partners in crime.

It could be just like they were saying, that he would truly kill anyone who hurt Edgar.

“Hey, next time, make sure to bring the milk tea hotter! It’s not like I have a sensitive tongue like a cat,” said Nico to Edgar and Raven who were leaving the room. Lydia glanced towards Nico, wondering what made him want to talk all of a sudden, but Edgar didn’t seem to notice that he said anything, only Raven stopped briefly, but after deciding that he imagined it, he followed after his master.

“He calls himself the heir of Lord Blue Knight, but if he’s a boy who refuses to believe that a cat can talk from the start, then he will never be able to see fairies, or come to understand them.”

She wondered if this means she’ll end up helping an imposter.

Either way, she had no choice in the matter. Lydia’s strength was drained from the thought that she’d become a captive.

From then on, every time she left her ship room, Ermine accompanied her.

Unlike her strange, nondescript brother, she was cordial and talked warmly to her, but she didn't know if that was just a mere show. Because she was the servant of Edgar.

"Ms. Carlton, the sunlight is strong today, so please use this," said Ermine as she covered a sun umbrella over Lydia who went out to the deck alone.

There were passengers who showed interest by glancing at the maid in men's clothing, but Ermine paid them no attention.

Lydia wasn't a daughter of the high-class society that she'd worry about sun tanning, but she did envy Ermine's beautiful white skin.

"The weather is unusually beautiful today for this country," remarked Ermine. The side of her face appeared like she was remembering the sun of a foreign country.

"Ms. Ermine, have you been to foreign country?"

"Please call me Ermine. And yes, I am not British."

"Now that I think about it, Edgar also said that he had been in a foreign country up till now... So that must have been true."

"Do you not trust Lord Edgar?"

"That's because there's so much he...., besides our first meeting was him grabbing me suddenly and pinning my arms behind my back. On top of that, I don't know if he's kind or frightening, or if he's a gentleman or something else, is he really an Earl in the first place?"

She replied with only a soft smile, and didn't mention anything about her master.

"And that man named Raven. He's young, but he was no expression on his face what so ever. Did Edgar order him not to smile? If he was ordered that, he seems like the type to follow it."

"Raven is that kind of child. It isn't that he's been ordered to act so. Ah, but, if it was Lord Edgar's order then he may do anything to follow it."

That kind of child. The way she said it sounded like she was very close to him. A relationship like she was kindly watching over him.

She must of sensed Lydia's curiosity and answer her question.

"Raven is my younger brother."

“Huh, but....”

“Our skin color is different because our father’s are different. Ms. Carlton, you say that you know anything about fairies, but have you ever traveled over to their world?”

“...Well, yes, you may not believe me, but, the passageways are everywhere. On the border of shades and sunlight, places where the wind momentarily changes course, in the thickets of hawthorns and bushes of elderberries, and in the shadows of the shamrocks leaves.”

“In our country, the existence of fairies was also believed. But, as something more frightening. And there were children who were born with the blood of those feared fairies. Raven was that child.”

“Eh, really? Then, he, can he also see and talk to fairies too?”

“I’m not sure. He was a child who didn’t want to talk to others about fairies.”

She could understand about not wanting to talk to others about it. If Lydia had a quiet personality about it, then she would too have done so. But of course, in order to not forget about her mother, she always kept her attention open toward that magical world. But Lydia was also, whispered behind her back of being a fairy changeling from a young child. She didn’t resemble her father or mother, her eyes color was extremely rare, and her eyes would follow something when she was alone in the baby crib, and then suddenly giggle and laugh, and when she grew up, she would play by herself with something invisible and talked to it like it was talking back to her, and that had disturbed her nanny.

She would just ignore those who called her an oddball, but when she was called a changeling, it was shocking and sad, like her ties and memories with her mother were negated.

“So he also had bad experiences. It’s something that other’s can’t understand.”

“I believe so. And in Raven’s case, it’s an incarnation of an evil spirit. It was originally regarded as a horrid existence, and the one to be possessed by it would be cast away from society, even as his older sister, I wasn’t able to understand everything about him. ...We left our country like we were hunted out, but we found our way to Lord Edgar and finally found our place in the

world.”

“...Because he’s the Earl of the fairyland?”

“Whether he’s the Earl or not, because he is a sad man.”

Sad? To Lydia he was arrogant and coercive, and manipulated other like a pawn of his own game, and seemed to be enjoying dangerous deals with others and treasure hunting.

Lydia tilted her head, and Ermine lifted the edges of her lip. She replied back with an expression that was mixed with a hurt smile.

“The Lord’s kindness and strictness is a part of his sadness. And that’s why he accepts our sadness as well. I only wish that the fairy world will bring true repose to him.”

Lydia wondered what she meant by true repose.

Because it was the place where the descendants of Lord Blue Knight will return to, or because it was her wish because he wasn’t the real heir, Lydia didn’t know.

Edgar and Raven and Ermine, they showed her different sides of themselves one after another that her picture of who they were was always shifting.

The alarm horn whistled. The low, vibrating sound was sucked into the darkening sky.

A group of people who were talking out on the deck, pointed to something out on the sea, and Lydia craned her neck to see.

It was an army patrol ship. The large black shadow headed in their direction. And then the ship they were on gradually slowed down.

“I wonder what happened,” said Ermine and knit her nervous brows. “Let’s go back to the room, Ms. Carlton.”

The room Ermine lead Lydia into, was Edgar’s cabin room. Edgar stood by the window, made an angry face and glared at the black patrol ship, but unexpectedly smirked as if he thought of something amusing, and turned to face Lydia.

“Perhaps Huxley is searching for us.”

“Huh, that’s impossible. Are you saying he’s moving the army?”

“Well. We’ll find out in due time.”

Huxley may be getting near to them, yet Edgar didn't show any signs of worry. According to the captain's explanation, there apparently was someone dangerous secretly stowed away on this ship, and so the crew is going around inspecting the rooms.

Perhaps Huxley protested to someone powerful he knew with that kind of complaint. There was a possibility that Lydia and Edgar were seen running onto this ship.

After a bit of time, a military officer came into the room with a few of his men, introducing himself as lieutenant commander, and said politely "I am terribly sorry, my lord, but may we have your permission to inspect your cabin?"

"Go ahead. It would be troublesome for me if there was someone dangerous hiding in this room. There are rooms we aren't using, so please inspect those as well," said Edgar without hesitation, as he sat on the sofa.

While he had his men do the inspection, the lieutenant verified the identities of Raven and Ermine, and asked a few simple questions to Lydia, and asked for her permission to enter her room.

"Uh, about that stow-away, what kind of person is it?"

If it was indeed Huxley's report, Lydia was curious to know what sort of complaint he told them.

"Well, the stow-away could be the one behind the robberies happening in London. We have a report saying the stow-away may have a hostage, and we decided this needed immediate action."

"A hostage."

"Yes, miss. Said to have threatened and kidnapped a young woman. A girl about the same age as you."

"Lieutenant, please don't say anything that would frighten her. It's already terrifying news. And isn't the thief you're talking about the one rumored on the streets to have killed a hundred people?"

From Edgar's words, Lydia finally remembered the news written in the newspaper. She wondered if Huxley used an actual robbery where the thief was on the run. And by claiming that the thief had a hostage, he maybe having them look for Lydia as well.

Perhaps he didn't anticipate that Edgar and Lydia would have prepared a ticket, and planned to capture the passengers that didn't have their names on the cabin list.

"Ah, I apologize. But, my lord, the rumor of him being the American killer was because they had similar characteristics. That murderer was executed."

His men came back from their search reporting that there were no abnormalities. Just after their report, the man who was taking notes behind the lieutenant suddenly interrupted.

"Lieutenant, about that thief, the report says that he's a young man with blond hair and his eyes are purple..."

The lieutenant didn't hide his scowl.

"Loine. That's enough."

"I see, that's a common characteristic. There's one here," said Edgar plainly.

Lydia couldn't stop herself, she turned to look at him. Now that she looked at him, he did have the same feature. But if it was just that, then there were many others with the same trait.

But.

Lydia had a bad feeling, and couldn't take her eyes off of Edgar.

"Well, it looks like our job here is done. We need to go to the next room. Thank you for your cooperation."

"Thank you for your service."

After the lieutenant and his men left the room, Edgar must have noticed Lydia's gaze and turned to face her.

She whipped her head back forward, but because she did it so unnaturally, her suspicion of him must have been easy to recognize, and she hated herself for showing that.

"Lydia."

"Wh, What is it?"

"We'll arrive at Scarborough port in about two hours. Make sure to be ready to get off the ship."

Without asking any questions, Edgar just smiled at her with his usual incontestable demeanor.

“Loine, what were you thinking. Did you want to call the Earl a thief?”

“No sir, uh, Lieutenant, it was just that the Earl did resemble him.”

“No he doesn’t, that portrait had the look of a good-for-nothing crook.”

“Yes, it did, but you can’t depend on a portrait. And...anyone can have that hair or eye color, but he has a distinguishing feature. If we verify that then everything would be clear.”

The self-important looking officer who was walking down the hall quickly, suddenly stopped his tracks and turned to face his subordinate.

“Then were you going to ask the Earl to stick out his tongue?”

Nico, who was sleeping on the hallway lamp stand’s sun lit warm marble, got his nap disturbed and twitched his ear.

“After we asked something humiliating like that, and there was nothing, do you think we’d get away with that? Of course he’d refuse and on top of that he’d put in a complaint. And to have a cross tattooed on your tongue means you’re a serial killer in America. If you want to mix that with the thief in London, just keep reading the gossip papers like the excited citizens.”

“...I’m sorry. But, uh, was he really executed in America? The serial killer who was called Sir John was said to be a charismatic man having a high class quality about him, and the body that was shown after he was hanged was rumored not to resemble someone like that...”

The lieutenant faced his subordinate and openly shrugged his shoulders.

“How can there be any class or charisma in a hanged body. And Loine, you’re mistaken about the general point. The one we are searching for, isn’t the passenger of the first class cabin, but the hoodlum hiding somewhere.”

Hmm. Passing his paw over his whiskers, Nico watched as the officers passed by, and plodded back to Lydia’s room on his two hind feet and grumbled to himself ‘Now this is going somewhere.’

Lydia and everyone got off the ship at Scarborough port, and headed west by railway.

The view from the window was repetitive and monotonous. And in the steam train, Lydia had to sit across from Edgar in a disquiet compartment which was unbearable for her.

Periodically she would stand up and about meaningless.

“Hey, hey, if you fidget like that, they’d get suspicious of you,” said Nico appearing in the passageway standing on his back hind feet.

“Hey, Nico, about what you said earlier, do you really thinkso.”

“If the officer said no, then wouldn’t you also think so?”

“You’re right, it’s hard to believe that a serial killer would be able to speak that perfect King’s English.”

She reached that decision, but there was still something bothering her.

Maybe it was the shady part about Edgar’s character from the first time they met.

“You know, you could just check his tongue.”

Lydia was told the news about the cross tattoo from Nico who eased-dropped on the conversation of the officers. She couldn’t understand how someone would come up with the idea of putting a tattoo on someone’s tongue and then actually performing that. However, that piece of information was very valuable. How she was going to check that, was something Lydia was mulling over in her head from when she heard it from Nico on the ship.

“But, you normally can’t see another person’s tongue. And the story about the tattoo was supposedly on the American, so if there was nothing on him, that wouldn’t be proof that he isn’t the thief that’s been doing the robberies in London does it?”

“For the time being, we can relax by knowing he isn’t the killer. Because they say that the London criminal’s victims are all alive.”

That could just be a coincidence. But, it could be just as Nico says.

She did want to get things straight.

But, Lydia ended up not coming up with an idea and returned to their compartment.

When she looked over to Edgar, he was sitting by against the window, with his stick resting on his lap and eyes closed.

Maybe he was sleeping.

Maybe I could use this opportunity....

Lydia tiptoed over to him. He didn’t seem like he was going to wake up. Even

though he was napping resting his chin in his hand, he was perfect, like if you would put him in a painting that would fit perfectly into an elegant frame. His golden hair swayed over his white cheek covering it with its shadow. Lydia focused on his lips.

But however much she stared at his mouth, she couldn't see his tongue. If she were to stick her finger in his mouth, he was sure to wake up. Even though she knew that, Lydia was drawn to Edgar, and didn't move from where she was bending down to look over him.

(Are men normally suppose to be more rugged?)

Long eyelashes, finely shaped lips and a smooth thin chin. She had an urge to touch him, like with a feeling you'd get when observing a marvelous sculpture of art.

When she reached out her finger, his lips slowly curved. Into an amused grin. He opened his eyes and looked straight into hers.

"May I help you?"

Lydia froze. She had her index finger pointed near the tip of his nose.

"If you were to going to offer your lips, then I was going to keep pretending to sleep, but I didn't think that I was going to get poked."

"Um, ...I was just..."

"It's alright, to touch me."

"No, I wasn't going to..."

She swapped her hand back. And she tried to run from the scene but Edgar grabbed her shoulder.

"Oh, I apologize; I shouldn't have snubbed a lady's offer. I would be more than happy to reply to your expectations."

He moved in toward her, which made Lydia go into a flustered panic.

"No, I, your tongue.."

"Tongue? I didn't imagine you'd fancy the French style."

"Wh, what are you thinking, you....!"

She struggled to shove Edgar away, but Lydia saw Raven carrying in the tea over his shoulder.

But, he didn't pay attention to Lydia nearly being pushed down on to the seat,

and remained expressionless as he placed the tea set on the table and was about to leave.

“Wait, you mister, why don’t you help me!”

“Raven wouldn’t stop me even if I were to snap your soft neck.”

What a level of loyalty. She wondered if these people were all in the same criminal group.

Rage bubbled up inside her. Her mind went blank for a moment, knowing that he was an Earl was the only restraint holding her back flew out of her head, and she whipped her open palm at him like she was going to do it to a scoundrel.

Her palm landed right on his cheek, and Edgar finally let go of Lydia. However she didn’t let it end with that, and tried to throw the tea cup that caught her eye.

“My lord!”

Lydia came to her senses to Raven’s voice.

But by then, the hot tea had already been splashed onto Raven’s arm as he cut in between them.

“I....I’m so sorry. You, you better cool that down with water.”

“I am fine. There is nothing to worry. I will go make a new pot of tea.”

“That won’t be necessary. Go get that treated by Ermine.”

He nodded to his master’s orders honestly, and Lydia watched as Raven left and heaved a sigh.

“Don’t worry about it,” said Edgar nonchalant.

“You, it’s your fault! You forced me...., and saying something scary like you’d break my neck like that.”

“That was just mentioning an example.”

“It would have been better if you got the hot tea on you! I didn’t have any intention of hurting Raven.”

“Hmm, then you don’t care about me who was slapped.”

“Of course I don’t!” She snapped at him and rushed out of the compartment.

“Stop it already, Lydia, even if it was a woman, someone who’d try to hurt the Earl will be killed.” Just when she spotted the dark back of Raven by the sink and was going to approach him, she heard the faint whisper of Nico’s voice.

He's joking again. But she was still nervous, but also hesitant about ignoring him after she spilt tea over him.

Raven must have noticed Lydia's footsteps approaching him, but he didn't turn around.

"Um, did it leave a mark?" She cautiously asked him.

"It isn't a big deal. More importantly..." He finally turned around and although he didn't show a smile as usual, he didn't look like he was angry either.

"Just like you said, I should have stopped Lord Edgar earlier."

"Then Edgar wouldn't have been thrown at with tea?"

"I never imagine that a lady would do such a thing."

Lydia was slightly insulted, but the feeling of contrite that she injured him won over that.

"I'll let you know that not all women would be flattered by Edgar flirting them."

"Yes, thank you for showing me that."

His serious response apparently wasn't intended to tease nor blame Lydia, but because he didn't mince his words, he was probably easier to understand than Edgar even though he didn't show any expressions.

"Pardon, but how old are you?" While she was at it, she decided to ask him what she curious about.

"I am eighteen."

"Oh. So you're one year older than me."

"It's because of this undeveloped face." He even replied that seriously.

Like he said, maybe because his eyes were big, he did appear to look some years younger than his actual age. And so if he were to smile, she thought he was sure to give a very friendly impression to others.

"I want to ask you, if, Edgar were to try to kill someone, would you really not stop him?"

"I wouldn't say that I would stop him, more like I would be the one to do the killing."

Being able to say something like that so naturally sent a shiver up her spin. Unlike Edgar, when this person said it, it didn't sound like a joke.

"You would dirty your hands for your master? But going so far for your master,

wouldn't that be mistaking your fealty to him?"

"If I was to commit a crime, it would only be for the sake of Lord Edgar. He taught me that I do not have to kill other than his orders. Although, it took some time for me to understand that."

She didn't understand what he meant. Only that, Lydia felt like she was standing in the depths of an endless darkness.

After looking up close she noticed that Raven's eyes which she thought was the same color as his pure black hair, actually was a dark green.

She remembered being told that he carried fairy blood in him, maybe that was due to those eyes of his. As that thought drifted by, his dark green hooked her. Then he also looked back at her.

"Oh, I'm sorry. I was just curious about your eye color. See, I have green eyes as well. Since green is the color of fairies over here, and in my case I can see fairies which apparently overlaps with other images of fairies, so I was called a changeling. Oh, a changeling is when a fairy kidnaps a human child and leaves their own offspring in its place and has humans take care of it."

From unexpectedly ending up looking at each other, Lydia became embarrassed and started to rattle on and on, but when she stopped to take a breath, he interrupted.

"A spirit is something that lives in the forest. The forests in England are pallid; they have the color of your eyes, the color of the sun.

Where I was born, it was a thick tenebrous green where there is no light. The fairies of this country are too bright for me to see, but you might be able to see the spirit in me."

He looked like he smiled faintly, barely noticeable to her eyes. And it was a dark almost tearful smile, and even if they had the same power to come in contact with fairies, she felt like he was a different kind of person.

A magical spirit incarnate from a different country.

Lord Blue Knight was said to enjoy traveling, and told of tales of happenings in far distant lands, and liven the royal court.

The eastern oriental countries at that time, was a farther place than the fairyland, filled with mysteries and wonders to the British.

The story of the Earl who came from the fairyland along with his magical servants.

Lydia had the feeling like she was taking a step into the old legend of the adventures of Lord Blue Knight.

Were they the Lord Blue Knight and his followers who came to the human world yet again?

Or were they killer thieves?

By the time they got off the steam train at the last station, the sky was glooming from the dark of dusk.

Normally stations were located in the outskirts, and so outside the station there was only one dark empty street for carriages to pass by on. There weren't that many other passengers besides them, and after all of them quickly dispersed, there were no other people besides them.

Raven went off saying that he will go catch a hack. There should have been a waiting area for the carriages behind the station building.

"Mister, are you looking for a carriage? Where's your destination?" Just then, a man spoke to them who emerged out from the dark shadow of the station building.

"No thank you. Our valet has gone to call a hackney," dismissed Edgar to the man with a cold shoulder.

"Oh don't say that, sir, I'll make it cheap for you," said the man as he kept creeping up to them, and suddenly grabbed ahold of Lydia's arm.

Before she could open her mouth, a sharp knife was fixed against her throat.

Edgar and Ermine assumed a ready stance. But as they looked around them, they were surrounded by a group of men who stepped out from the shadows.

"Don't move, sir."

Turning to face the voice which was a man who stepped out of the group and showed them a flash of the pistol that was hidden under his frock coat.

It was Huxley.

"Oh, so it was you Huxley. Although I didn't know you went by that name," said Edgar in a ridiculing tone.

The man glared ferociously back at Edgar, which made him look like a

completely different person than the Huxley who kindly greeted Lydia.

“Don’t give yourself such airs. Your pretend of being some sort of noble is absurd.”

“It’s not pretend. And besides, I’m not ‘sir’, it’s ‘Lord.’ Try not to mix that up.”

“Stop joking around! Are you enjoying an extravagant trip with our father’s money?”

“The compensation your father offered me, unfortunately, was just pocket money. I couldn’t agree with it, but that’s over with. It’s not like we have money troubles.”

“Compensation!? After you stole everything, you plan on stealing the jewel our father is after? It’s your fault that father...”

“The reason your father is in the hospital on the brink of death was because you carelessly fired your gun. Even if you aimed at me, wouldn’t it be obvious that it might hit your father who was behind me when you think about your aim? And yet you cry out like I was the one who did it.”

“Shut up! Shut up! I’ll make sure you never are able to open that cocky mouth of yours again!”

Listening to the two of their conversation, Lydia stood, still grappled by the man behind her, in utter shock.

What was the meaning of this? Edgar was after Huxley’s father’s money and jewel? Huxley shot his gun and it hit his father?

“We’re going to have Ms. Carlton help us from now, understand? Hey, tie them up. I’m going to drag you all to the police and have you hanged.”

“Oh, then you and your father’s crimes will be made public. Would you like to accompany us to the gallows? Or, maybe that would be first.”

Just as Edgar was finished, a black shadow crept out beside Lydia.

With a ruffle of air like the faint beating of wings, the shadow flew back away from Lydia, lightly brushing against her cheek.

The man that was grappling Lydia, fell, to the ground without making a sound. His neck was severely twisted, he had stopped breathing.

The shadow danced further on.

Raven.

As if protecting from Huxley's line of fire, he glided down in front of his master. He stood ready, with a slender knife in his hand.

Huxley's men jumped all at once to try to hold down Raven.

The faces of the men weren't only the ones on the ship, but it looked like they had other thugs who they must have picked up nearby in their group.



With just Raven, it looked like he was outnumbered. However there was another whirlwind that appeared. Ermine kicked down one of the men who was standing by her. In that following movement with a knife in her hand, she backed up Raven. Lydia realized that her men's clothing was for the purpose of flexible movement, but she couldn't help but gape at them. The Blue Knight Earl and his two mysterious raven and ermine servants? This was like it was out of the storybook. Lydia then realized that Edgar was standing beside her. But just as she turned to face him, he grabbed and pulled on her arm. At that moment, there was the sound of a gunshot and a hole was shot open by

their feet.

Raven dodged aside in a flash. His leg that was swung up high came down strong and hard to knock out the pistol gripped in Huxley's hand.

Then he turned around defending Edgar with his back, and evaded the men who came charging at him one by one.

"My lord, there is a hackney at the corner just ahead."

"Can I leave this to you?"

"Please be careful."

After their simple exchange, Edgar turned his back pulling Lydia's arm and headed away from the fight.

The lamp that lit the carriage shined faintly far off in the deep dark black. However Lydia caught her foot on the hem of her entangled skirt and tumbled. Just when she heaved herself up, the tip of a saber pointed at the tip of her nose.

"I said that we will take her along with us. John, you can struggle all you want, but you're only a worthless good for nothing that's fit to die in the garbage pit."

Whose John?

Huxley grabbed Lydia.

Why, she thought to herself, as her blood boiled with fury. Why does every single one of them try to trick me, and threaten me, and why do I have to listen to what they say?

Even if Huxley had an edged weapon, she didn't care as she finally lost her temper. Lydia fought back frantically, trying to break lose of his grip.

"Gossam, no, stop!" yelled Edgar.

Huxley must have been ticked off when Lydia bit down on his finger, and swung up his saber about to strike.

Shoved out of the strike by Edgar, Lydia witnessed the edge of the blade scrapping him on the shoulder, and slicing open his coat.

Edgar twisted his brows in pain.

When Huxley charged to strike again, Edgar, though he was injured, held out his walking stick.

From his stick, he drew out a rapier, like a sword from its scabbard. He

stopped Huxley's saber with the forte of his blade, charged his strength and threw him back. He used that moment and force to cut Huxley's cuff, which made Huxley quickly step backwards to put distance between them. Once again, Edgar pulled Lydia's arms he dashed off in the opposite direction of Huxley. When they finally spotted a hackney, he shoved her in and climbed in himself.

"Who...who in the world are you! Who is John? And Gossam..." cried Lydia, but Edgar stopped her screaming by slapping his hand over her mouth.

"Drive, now."

Even though Edgar was injured and the situation looked like he was forcing a young girl into the carriage, which from a normal person's view would look like a kidnapping, the driver didn't ask any questions after he was tossed a wad of money.

Chapter 3 - The truth and lies of fugue

It was an abandoned well, but it wasn't dry. Lydia drew water from the well with a hand bucket that was buried in the thick grass after she cleaned it. She found a cracked cup and a distorted iron pot by the corner of the dirt floor of the kitchen-like area.

The uninhabited shack that was near crumbling, and its wood hinges made creaking sounds every time the wind hit it.

The place they were at was located quite away from the road, and thanks to the thicket which acted as a blindfold and the sun setting, Huxley wouldn't realize there was a building here even if he managed to come after them.

"Hey, Lydia, shouldn't we hurry up and run out of here?" said Nico, who appeared on the stone hedge that surrounded the well.

"Where were you. I thought we got separated."

"I was following after you with no problem. Although I did make myself invisible."

"That's right, you always disappear when it turns dangerous."

"But then what was I suppose to do in that situation? I was at my limit with trying to not lose sight of you.

More importantly, I don't think you have time to be drawing water."

Lydia let out a sigh, and sat down next to Nico.

He was right. If she were to escape, now was the chance.

Inside the shack, Edgar might be keeping an eye on them, but he is injured. Maybe she could manage to run him out.

After being forced on the carriage by the injured Edgar, she wondered how far they traveled. After a while, he stopped the carriage. He told the driver to keep on driving to the next town, and handed him money to keep quiet on top of the charge, got off and started to walk off into the footpaths that weaved through the farm fields.

Most likely, he must have anticipated that Huxley was going to go after the

carriage.

And decided to spend the night in this shack that he found this dilapidated house just as the sun was setting.

It wasn't like she was chained, but in the end Lydia decided to follow after Edgar.

She imagined if she could be relieved of her hopelessness with the company of a killer thief in the dark night road, on that forest road which didn't have one single street lamp or houses, but decided that was ridiculous.

That's right. He was a criminal.

"He, really was a wanted criminal."

"...Looks like it."

Edgar called the man who introduced himself as Huxley as Gossam. The name Gossam was the name of the family that was victim nearly killed by the robber. Huxley must have been Lord Gossam's son. When Edgar stole the money from their estate, he must have missed his target and shot his own father.

Anyhow, that was all that Lydia understood.

"But he called the money he stole compensation. And it sounded like the Gossam family were doing something against the law as well."

"Lydia, who cares if the two criminals have a falling out and start to kill each other. That doesn't mean we have to get involved in it. There's no need to even check the tattoo on his tongue, that man is not your average robber. Remember he was called Sir John? That's supposedly the one executed in America..."

"I'm fully aware of that, Nico." She looked down at the light cut scar on her palm. It was made when she tried to struggle to get free from Huxley.

"He saved my life."

"Listen, that's because if something were to happen to you, he wouldn't be able to find Lord Blue Knight's jeweled sword."

"That's true. But, there would be no point in getting killed himself by rescuing me."

"Because he isn't dead, and he doesn't have any life threatening injuries. If it were to buy your sympathy, then it must have been cheaper than 500 pounds to him."

What he was saying made perfect sense.

And then Nico held out the palm of his hand, or more like the palm of his paw, in which he had a small white ball.

“Grind this up and make him drink it.”

“What is it?”

“A fairy’s secret sleeping formula. It’ll put him to sleep. Once that happens, then there’s no worry about us being followed or caught. Now the chance since that walking weapon servant of his isn’t with him.”

“Hm.You’re right. The chance to escape is now when Raven and Ermine isn’t here.”

“Yes, you got to wake up and snap out of it.”

There really was something wrong with me.

If I don’t run now, who knows what the robber would do to me.

Clutching the pill in her fist, Lydia stood up.

Walking through the door frame that was nearly falling down and entering the shack house, Edgar was in the corner of the small room, sitting down on the floor and leaning against the wall looking exhausted.

He looked so bad, like if he appeared like a exhausted wounded man, then she might hesitate to try to escape.

Would it be lighthearted of her to say that he didn’t look like a dangerous person.

There was a fire in the hearth. He must have had matches with him. Broken wooden chair parts and other furniture remains were used as wood for the flames as they built up and warmed the room.

“It’s not good if you move around.”

Looking up, he tilted his head as if surprised and wondering why she returned after she went outside.

Although he could just be pretending that as well.

“I just lit a fire.”

Lydia carried the iron pot filled with water over to the heath. And then turned and walked over to where Edgar was.

“Does it hurt?”

“A little.”

“This is comfrey. You better grind the leaves and put it over your wounds. It will stop the bleeding and disinfect it.” She showed Edgar the medicinal herb leaves. For a moment he hesitated, and he narrowed his eyes like he wanted to say something, but quietly accepted them.

“You found them even in this darkness.”

“About that, would you give me one of your cuffs?”

“Ahh...., the charge for the medicine.” From one of the cuffholes on his shirt arm, he took off a cuff that had a garnet in it. In a carelessly way, he tossed it over to Lydia.

“Don’t get me wrong. I’m not the one to get this,” said Lydia and threw it out the window.

“Is there someone outside?”

“Yes, a fairy.”

“Well, you certainly overcharge for some common garden leaves.”

“But wouldn’t be able to find comfrey that’s has grown that much around here.”

Edgar stared down at the slightly dried, limp leaves, and then he suddenly started chuckling and laughed out loud.

“So this is your negotiation skills with fairies?”

“What. Are you saying my fairy talk is absurd?”

“No,it’s just that for a moment there was a part of me that was seriously believing in fairies.”

“You’re saying you can’t believe them with just this?”

“Who knows. More than that, I can’t believe you’re still here in front of me.”

Seeing him with that kind of weak attitude it made her feel like she was the bad one trying to escape.

She was going to abandon someone injured, someone who had gotten hurt in Lydia’s place.

She reassured herself in her head, or gave herself the excuse, that she was only going to make her escape after she tended to his wounds.

Just like Huxley, even Raven and Ermine could be coming after the carriage they

were in, so there was no reason for her to panic, and if she waited till it was nearly dawn then it would be safer for Lydia not to have to walk in the dangerous dark roads.

But like this, it was undeniable that there was a part of her that was hesitant about it.

But, I was the one that was tricked and used.

Lydia, moved a few feet away from Edgar and sat down on a creaking chair.

“Why? I thought it was your forte to trick and threaten people and make them do what you want. My lord?”

“The spell’s been broken.”

“I haven’t been under any spell from the beginning,” replied Lydia confidently, although she thought to herself if that was true.

Even now, she could be remaining here because she couldn’t resist the dangerous charm he released.

Even though she thought that, she denied it immediately in her mind.

Alright, he may be someone who has the charming looks and says pleasant things that women would love to see and hear, but what Lydia felt from him, wasn’t something sweet like that, but more like she was curious about his darkness because it was curiously frightening.

He seemed like a noble from the time he was born, and yet in truth he was a dangerous criminal. He used his sharp way of talking and perfect smile to capture the hearts of others. But with that brilliant display he covered the truth, and used others with his lies.

And yet, why would he defend and get injured for her.

Just as Nico said, it may be because he wanted to get Lydia’s sympathy, but that was just the lucky result, and at that time, in that one second he reacted, it was impossible he was thinking about it that hard.

In the first place, Lydia’s action at that time was too rash and thoughtless and it was completely unpredictable.

That’s why she must have wanted to find out the mysterious part about him.

But was there the magic that he used on her as well.

“I want to know, who are you? Lord Edgar? Or Sir John?”

Taking off his frock coat, he hesitated for a moment, but answered her question: "Edgar, that was my first name."

"What do you mean by 'was'?"

"Because he died. The boy with that name died, when he was twelve, along with his parents. They were suspected of taking part in a rebellion, and his father killed his family and then took his own life. The family line ended there. That's why, the one in front of you, is just a ghost. You can call me however you want."

"But you're here, alive."

"Yes, alive.I know I'm in the presence of a lady, but excuse me."

He took off his gilet, or waistcoat, along with his blood stained shirt, and wrinkled his perfectly sculptured brows as he inspected his wound.

Eitherway, the spot where he was was far away from the fire, and so Lydia didn't mind him.

Unconcerned with her, Edgar carried on.

"But, it wasn't like I was rescued. When I came to, I was in hell, in a town in South East America.I had been sold to a man who wanted a white slave, and a person who was supposed to be dead wasn't treated as a human there. I escaped from that place four years ago. Raven and Ermine escaped with me. We hid in the downtown district, and evaded the men who hunted for us, we did anything to survive."

As she listened to his unimaginable story, the reason she probably didn't help tend his wounds was because her mind was filled with distrust.

Even this story, it could be a big lie.

"And about you being a killer thief? Did you really kill a hundred people?"

"Rumors tend to get exaggerated as it's passed on."

"So did you?"

"We were in the lowest part of society, in the dirty dumps. Boys the same age as us, would live by stealing and selling their bodies, and doing that they would only just barely get by. They just lived a life of a stray dog; they couldn't read or think, and just lived hopelessly. But they were just never told. About the location where gold is hidden, how to get your hands on it and that dirty money

was dirty money, something that didn't exist in the open society."

"And that's how you became their leader and they all called you Sir."

"King of the sewer rats? Yes, maybe. A king just orders his army. He decides the plan, gathers his men, gives them weapons and orders them to go. In a battleground there are sure to be casualties. And that's indeed my fault, so I won't say I have never killed anyone. But, I don't want you to worry so I'll say this, the money I have been paying with was not stolen. I did jobs as a day laborer, and built up money along with counterfeit gamble, oh, but you wouldn't approve of that either, anyway, I went around investing in businesses by buying their stocks. That's the source of my wealth. Luckily, it's built up so much that no one would suspect me when I called myself a noble."

Lydia could only listen to him quietly. Edgar didn't change his expression, and talk about himself like he was a different person.

"However I'm just a man who has no name or identity and suppose to be dead. Even if it was legitimate business, I made the deals using another person's name. Whereever I run to, the mark of a slave follows me, and I tremble at the shadows of my hunters."

"The mark... of a slave?"

"You know already, don't you? About the cross that I have on me.Didn't you try and look for it on the train?"

So he was awake and yet he did something like that.

The offended part of her must have shown upon her face, because he smiled amusingly at her.

"Your reaction was so cute, I couldn't help myself."

How he could say such a thing, when the conversation was so depressing, was beyond her.

"Next time I'll make sure to spill bubbling hot water on you."

"I won't do it anymore."

"Fine. Then you really do have a tattoo."

"It's not a tattoo, more like a brand. The man who didn't want me dead, burnt it on me to mean I was his slave. I don't know where the rumor of the tattoo started from, but it seems like other gangs started to copy it, and thanks to that

it made a good cover.”

So there were leaders of criminal gangs who posed as Sir John all over the place.

Then no one would know who had started the rumor about the heartless murderer. Before she knew it, Lydia was thinking about his situation positively like that.

“Then, whose is this man named Gossam? How did you return to England?”

“Gossam was a doctor, and had come to America looking for specimens to use in his experiments of the human body. On top of that, he wanted the brain of a criminal to do his psychiatric research on.”

“A, a brain...., and experiments on the human body?”

“That’s right. I had been captured because someone reported me, and I was waiting for my hanging. And Gossam exchanged me with someone else secretly. It seems he paid quite some money to the ones involved in that.”

“And so they took your brain?”

“That’s an interesting remark.”

I don’t think so, thought Lydia, what he was saying was all so extreme, and she started to not be able to accept it all.

He used his unraveled necktie as bandage, and tied it around his wound, how he did that looked like he was used to it.

Perhaps in the place he was living, injuries happened all the time.

“He went all the way to get his criminal and brought him back to London, so he tried to get as much data as he could. I was injected with drugs, and other painful experiments that were as close to torture. I wasn’t the only test experiment, there were ones who had their heads opened while still alive, and I saw subjects that were opened up inside. He didn’t only do research on criminals, but used innocent people in his experiments and killed so many.”

Hearing that, she was beginning to feel sick. Lydia couldn’t imagine that kind of world. The underside of society, filled with conspiracies and madness. She couldn’t imagine what the people who got pulled into that world saw or felt.

That’s why, she would never fully be able to understand his person.

“To me, it’s more unimaginable than fairies that there is such twisted parts in

people's hearts. Are you saying there are people who feel indifferent selling other humans and using them as experiments?" Lydia lowered her eyes, and could only barely say those words.

"You are a fortunate girl. However, humans are creatures that able to do any kind of atrocity."

She felt the air around her move, and she snapped her head up. Lydia didn't realize that Edgar was standing right in front of her, looking down at her.

He was a man who just reached his twenties, yet like he said everything he had was taken, his name, his identity, his past, and if it was true that he survived with all his strength, then what was hiding behind that captivating smile of his would be unimaginable to others, making him just a dangerous person.

What he had in his hands, was the rapier that was set in his stick. Lydia's body went stiff.

"I knew about the story and legend of Lord Blue Knight ever since I was a child. I got that gold coin at an antique shop in America. I was planning on looking into it when I eventually returned to England. But even if I came back to London I was still imprisoned by Gossam and couldn't move. That's why I had Gossam find the gold coin and hinted that it lead the way to the hidden location of the star sapphire, and waited until he finished researching about it. I couldn't get killed by him while I was still waiting for Raven and Ermine, so that trick was perfect to buy me some time. But because of that, I have to compete against his family for the treasure but that can't be helped."

"...But then, that means you're not the real descendant of Lord Blue Knight right? If you have me help you, even though your not the real one, then it will be impossible to get the sword that's protected by the merrows."

"Still my only option is getting that jeweled sword."

"Will you be happy getting a fake name? Shouldn't you be trying to get back your real one?"

Bending down just barely, he lowered his face down to Lydia's.

"You're wrong, Lydia, to think that there's no worth in something fake. What would be the point in getting back the family name that's labeled as a rebel? The slave boy and the gang leader are dead. Even if it's fake, I need a name

that's big with an undeniable presence. I need that secure power so that the ones who put me through hell will not be able to put their hands on me. If I cannot obtain the Earl name, then I will just die like the garbage they say I am. But if I do get it, I'll show you that I make that fake into the real thing," he said, kindly persuading her, and then held the stick in front of Lydia's eyes.

"Nn, Now what?"

"If a thief had a weapon with him, you wouldn't be able to sleep right? I'll leave this with you."

Stepping away from Lydia, he sat back down against the wall in the corner.

His real self was in the grave. If he really lived the fake life as the object of another person's, then everything was a lie. To him, there wasn't the real or fake, just the difference of if it being a useful lie or not.

What he told Lydia, couldn't be sure to be true.

But if it was him, then he could make a glass ball look like a diamond. Just like that, Lydia's eyes were being covered, and felt persuaded by his thinking of why can't glass be considered a diamond.

She even had the thought that perhaps, the name of Lord Blue Knight that this person would claim, would be more suited for him than anyone else.

On top of that, he gave her charge of his weapon, and treated her like he was a gentleman on the outside. It could be his plot to buy her sympathy, and to prove that, Lydia was started to want to believe he wasn't a cruel person.

But of course, she still was cautious of him. Going through the trouble of handing her his weapon, may be his way of checking if Lydia was planning to escape.

If she were to escape, then that would be trouble for Edgar. It would make his search for the jeweled sword of Lord Blue Knight ever more difficult, and heighten his chance of being caught by Huxley or the police.

He may be thinking he could manage one girl, even if he handed her his stick.

Then what would he do if she hinted that she was going to escape. Would he show her the true criminal part of him.

It was best for her to make him drink the sleeping pill before she needed to see such a side of him.

Determined, Lydia stood up and peered down into the pot over the fire. She scooped up the hot water with the cup. Dropping the pill that Nico gave her, she added a mint leaf to it, and handed it to Edgar.

"It may not be fancy as tea, but at least this will calm you down."

"Ah, thank you," he smiled at her, showing no worry.

But Lydia sensed something sharp behind that smile and she suddenly felt her back turning cold.

The hand that Edgar took the cup in, touched Lydia's hand. Without thinking she pulled it back, and he grabbed it.

"What did you put in?"

"Huh...., Wh, what are you talking about.."

"Someone who's plotting something, their behaviors shows their caution. You may think you were doing it unseen, but I saw that you slipped in something other than the mint. It's dangerous to provoke a criminal with something like this."

"Let go of me."

"If I let go, you'll run."

"...Of course I would, you're a burglar!" shouted Lydia, saying something more provoking.

"You really don't have any self-defense. Just like the time you were caught by Huxley, you shouldn't try to get away so recklessly, you'd run out of lives even if you had more than one."

"Are you saying you're going to kill me?"

"I would never dare. If I did, then I wouldn't find out where the sword was hidden."

"Even if you threaten me, I'll never do as you say!"

"You really don't get it. There are other ways of making someone do as you say. Naive little miss, I'm sure you could never imagine how it feels to fall into despair so deep and dark that you didn't even want to continue breathing anymore."

At that moment, Lydia remembered how Ermine described Edgar: a sad man. More than being scared of him, she felt her heart hurt for the person in front of

her who revealed his true self for the first time.

It wasn't the true criminal part of him, it was the pain, the pain of someone who was robbed of their happiness and future that should have been promised to them.

"....You've felt despair like that."

Suddenly, he frowned.

Maybe she said something that could have angered him.

Oh my instinct to sense danger really must be messed up.

Just as she thought that, Edgar left go of her.

Still looking like he was in pain, he lowered his face.

Eventually, he said "that's right" under his breath.

"The Blue Knight Earl's sword is my only hope. Lydia, are you abandoning me."

His gaze clinged onto her, as if he was trying to stop his lover from leaving him.

Lydia too, was about to forget her captive position.

"....Even if you say that it's no use."

"Please don't go."

"You're not making any sense. You were the one who threatened me and planned to make me do as you say."

"If you say you're going, then I'll kill myself."

"Wait, that's your threat?"

"If my hope will disappear, then I'll just suffer if I keep living."

He was gazing at the cup that Lydia handed to him and then gulped it down in a desperate manner.

"If this were to be poison and I were to die, then it still wouldn't hurt you at all."

"D-don't be ridiculous. It's a sleeping potion."

"I see. Then my destiny will be decided when I awake. If you disappeared before my eyes, then my life ends there.... Ah, that doesn't sound bad. My destiny is in your hands. It's like words of passionate love."



You've got to be joking.

He gave the shocked and gaping Lydia a hurt, yet perfectly graceful smile.

“Goodnight, my fairy.”

Even if it was in a joking tone, when he said it, it sounded like an honest love proposal.

Leaving the sound of his sweet voice still ringing in her ears, he lowered down to the floor, wrapped in his coat.

Immediately he sank into a deep sleep, and Lydia stood looking down at the defenseless site of Edgar.

“Oh, thank goodness, that was scaring,” said Nico, appearing himself.

“Geez, Lydia, your timing to put in the potion wasn’t good at all. Well, it worked out all right in the end since he drank it.”

Poking Edgar with his back leg, he made sure that the potion was working.

“Now, let’s hurry up and go Lydia.”

Ted, called that man to Edgar.

The voice that never disappeared from his memory, still tormented him even in his sleep.

Ted, you’re perfect. All you have to do is look down at those inferior to you and stand basking in the light. Eventually your followers will present themselves and gather around your feet.

I’ll teach you. How easy it is to manipulate those around you. They wouldn’t be aware how you’ve become able to make them move as you wish.

Then that’s how you will become me. You will think as I do, rule as I do, and manipulate as I do.

There is no way that that will happen.

Because Edgar had managed to escape from the clutches of the man who said that. He didn’t end up like that man wanted.

He was a man who wore a mask, covering the distorted, ugly half of his face that was said to be from a wound in battle.

He called himself the Prince, and attempted to make Edgar his puppet.

He wanted a doll that was loyal and attractive, a puppet that would move, talk and work to his wishes, in his place since he couldn’t appear before the public.

His dream of robbing the puppet of his will and soul and make it his walking empty shell would never succeed.

But, once in a while, Edgar would become fearful.

Everything that he had built up till now could actually be maneuvered by that man.

Because when Edgar desperately broke out, and hid and tried to survive he ended up using the knowledge and skills that was hammered into him.

If he could successfully put himself above others, acting tolerant and patience towards them which made him appear attractive and charming, then everything would go the way he wanted.

He could make others happy and nervous, make them pity and fear him at his will, manipulating their feelings and use them to his advantage.

Yet Edgar knew that those he manipulated like that were not his true allies.

Trust could not be formed in a master-servant or charismatic-follower relationship, but only when two individuals stood parallel to each other. But that wasn't easy, it couldn't be formed between anyone.

Without any reason, his only allies were Raven and Ermine.

And he had no other choice so he used options just for the spur of the moment. After all, nobody could understand the pain that Edgar and his friends went through. He rationalized that he'd just used them as he pleased.

Lydia was another one of the many he was going to use, but it didn't work out. If it was a young ignorant girl like that, he thought it would be easy to win her over, but she didn't trust him immediately like he planned.

It was unexpected that their identities would be revealed because of the appearance of Gossam's eldest son, but thanks to the wound that Edgar just happened to get, it was an advantage as he could use it to buy her sympathy.

That's why he decided to talk about his past. It seemed like she was still hesitating, but in the end, she decided that she still couldn't trust them.

When he saw her slip in the pill, there was only one option left to Edgar.

He would make her listen by violence.

And yet he couldn't understand why he did such a thing like give her the chance to escape.

You've felt despair like that.

Why could she think about him when she was faced with a terrifying criminal. At a time when all you could think about was how to protect yourself.

Edgar became confused as to how he appeared in those golden green fairy-like eyes of hers.

Usually, he was absolutely aware of how he appeared to others. He was conscious and acted the part, and used to creating the impression he wanted to leave on others, but with Lydia, he felt like she looked past Edgar's layers of masks to act the part of an evil, inhuman creature.

He couldn't believe himself for spilling out his deep, honest feelings for wishing her to not leave him.

And no one agree that killing himself could be an effective threat.

But it didn't matter to him anymore.

Rather, he thought it was better if she did poison him.

A simple sleeping potion gradually drained the power of sleep over him, and brote him to his awakening.

The light of the sun washed over his eyelids, stirring his awake.

Edgar slowly opened his eyes.

The morning sun poured over his body from the open shack roof and the cracks of the walls.

Oh, morning has come.

A morning by myself.

“Meow.”

Hearing the meow of a cat, Edgar sat himself up and spotted a gray cat that had a necktie tied around its neck sitting by the window sill.

That’s Lydia’s cat. Why is it here. Just as he wondered that, the sight of the girl, clutching his stick and sleeping up against the back of the chair near the hearth came into his eyes.

“Geez, I really can’t keep up with this anymore,” mumbled Nico and threw a scone at the young man who was completely dazed, staring at Lydia.

Hitting him on the head, he turned back to the cat. He still tilted his head like he didn’t know what he just witnessed, maybe at the reason why Lydia didn’t escape, or maybe at the impossibility that a cat threw a scone at him with one of its front paws.

He glanced at the scone that dropped down by him, and didn’t move like it would hurt his pride to receive spared food from a cat.

“Eat it,” said Nico, in a purposefully arrogant way.

“Uhh, Nico, wasn’t it. Thank you for your offer but I’m fine. Just like how you prefer your tea hot, it goes against my policy to receive food from others.”

“Hmm, so you can comprehend what I’m saying.”

“...It may be my imagination, but you sound rude when you talk.”

“Oh, I see, you’re the type of human that can hear us but doesn’t realize that you are. There are halfway humans like you every so often. Well, no mater, as long as you can understand what I’m saying. Now pay attention, you bloody

villain, if you do anything to Lydia I'll never forgive you."

Opening his mouth and hissing with his fangs must have sent his message to Edgar.

"Ah, so you are worried about Lydia," said Edgar, looking back over to Lydia.

"I wonder why she didn't leave."

"Who knows." To Nico, that was a major dissatisfaction.

Nico said that if the thief died on his own, then that would be good for society to Lydia, but she didn't leave.

Perhaps her feeling of sympathy to him for getting wounded in her place must have won. Even if he really died, then that could have haunted her dreams.

But Nico thought that if someone depended on Lydia, she couldn't turn them down. Even though she was called a fairy changeling when she was little and treated like the freak of town, she never came to hate people.

Instead she believed that people like her were born to become the bridge between humans and fairies and she would eventually become needed for her gift.

For now she worked for the townspeople who were making fun of her by starting with handing a 'fairy doctor' sign which emphasized her soft-heartedness, and if there was someone in trouble she was sure to come to their help.

That's why she couldn't come to hate Edgar that she could leave him to die.

"Maybe she fell in love with me."

"That's impossible."

"Maybe, you're right."

The sunlight reflected on her hair brightening its reddish brown shine.

Edgar stood up and slowly stepped over to Lydia. But stopped when Nico jumped down onto Lydia's lap.

"Are you saying I can't? I'm just going to touch her a little, so overlook it just this once."

"In your dreams."

Ignoring the hiss, he reached out his hand. He touched the smooth hair that was hanging down across her cheek.

Lydia opened her eyes a crack.

The sunlight reflected off her golden green eyes she saw fairies with.

“Good morning, Lydia.”

To top it off, before Nico could react, Edgar slipped up Lydia’s hand up to his lips and kissed the back of her hand.

“Huh..., what were you planning to do! You pervert!” Lydia scampered up in a panic.

“Nothing really. Since your cat was guarding you.”

Was it really worth sympathizing for this frivolous bastard, thought Nico as he gave out a sigh.

“Hey Lydia, I brought you some scones, let’s have breakfast.”

She caught the scone he threw at her with both her hands, but still eyeing Edgar suspiciously.

“I thought you had already hated me, so I’m happy to meet you again.”

“...I do hate you. I hate liars. That’s why I hate you too.”

“But you decided that you wouldn’t abandon me.”

“That’s, because I’m a fairy doctor and I accepted your job offer. But it’s not like I’m saying I’ll help you get the Lord Blue Knight’s sword. If the merrows are protecting it, then I want to make it clear that it’s out of your reach.

Merrows aren’t bad fairies but they are powerful. And it’s my job as a fairy doctor to teach a careless thief like you, who doesn’t believe in fairies, that what you're doing is pointless.”

“I will take that as you’re worried about me.”

“...More like it’s my policy.”

“Let’s work together and get the sword.”

“Edgar, are you listening to me?”

“Ahh, you’re going to call me by that name.”

“...Well, that is your real name isn’t it?”

“You've made me so happy, Lydia.”

It looked like he was his old self again. Lydia leaned back when he held her hands.

“You weren’t really planning on dying, weren’t you....”

Of course he didn't, said Nico.

"I'm alive thanks to you. You saved my life."

"All right, now let go!"

This man maybe more troublesome than a merrow, mumbled Nico as he worried about the road ahead.

When the Scotland yard visited the residence of Professor Carlton in London, it was just after he asked for the help from a police acquaintance of his.

The letter that arrived from his daughter Lydia several days ago had the date of when she left the house, but even when it came the day when the ship reached London, she didn't appear.

She didn't give him any notice after that and he became worried, and even though he sent a letter asking what happened to this house in Scotland, he couldn't stand waiting for a reply and asked about it to the police just in case.

According to the police officer that came to his London home, there was no sign that she used the cabin room of the ship that was bought under the name Lydia Carlton. And the day that that ship left Forth harbor, there was a witnessing of a man who resembled the burglar behind the robbery at the Gossam estate at the same harbor, even a report that he kidnapped a young girl.

"Of course that doesn't mean your daughter was the one that was taken," added the police officer.

"So was there any news from then? Like a contact from the kidnapper or a ransom note...., even if it isn't anything direct, something like a report of someone suspicious walking around or something that you've picked up."

"Nothing has happened, and we don't want anything to happen and that's why I contacted the police." Even Carlton, who was normally calm, couldn't stop from panicking when it came to the only precious daughter of his.

And the chance that she could be kidnapped by a criminal, that's terrible!

He ran his fingers through his hair which made his straggly hair even more disarranged.

"Then, if there's contact from the kidnapper, please let me know immediately."

"What if there's no contact? You're not going to start looking for my daughter now?"

“For now, we are searching for the rumored burglar, and the search is only within England. And it may be the case that the kidnapper has left the country, and so the connection between your daughter could disappear. Please understand that can mean searching for your daughter only would become highly difficult.”

Being told that businesslike and after the police left, Carlton sank down onto the sofa and dropped his head into his hands.

Only after being shaken on the shoulder by his assistant at the university did he snap out of his blank state of mind.

“Professor, what happened? Are you sick?”

“Ah? Ah, it’s you Langley.”

Carlton pushed up his round spectacles and thought for a moment, then suddenly stood up.

“I know I shouldn’t be sitting around. My daughter could be kidnapped.”

“What! Really?”

“That’s why I’m going to go search for her. Langley, I’m leaving my work up to you.”

“Please just wait a moment. How are going to search and where?”

“I’m going to check my Scotland residence, and then...” As he spoke, he went into his bedroom and opened up a suitcase. Opening the closet, he starting throwing in his clothes.

“There wasn’t any word from your house over there, right? And you do have any clues to follow?”

“...No.”

There was no way that one person could search for what the police couldn’t.

Carlton dropped his shoulders and sat down on his bed.

“Please calm down. I’ll have the maid make some tea. And then let’s think what we can do.”

Langley was used to handling the professor. His daughter described Carlton as largely useless besides his research, and even his assistant could see that. His body was on the thinner side, and he didn’t care about his clothing or hairstyle, he even would walk around the campus grounds with a book open and get his

foot caught and crash into a tree and be attacked by a dog.

But to his students that didn't lower his quality as a professor.

"Ah, yes. You're right. I'm sorry for panicking like that."

Becoming a little calmer, Carlton thought that if it wasn't something major like a kidnapping and she came into some sort of trouble, then if he just waited then everything would be solved eventually.

Lydia was a daughter who could take care of herself, and that's why he wasn't that worried about living away from her. After some time he'd get word from her, or she was sure to pop up.

But then, what if she was involved into some sort of trouble.

If it was a burglar, then the kidnapper would contact him for a ransom. Till then, he couldn't do anything.

Or if the kidnapper wasn't after money, and using her as a hostage till he could escape, then would she be released after he was done with her, or.....

The more he thought about it, the more he became terrified. The tea with brandy in it didn't help to calm him down at all.

"The burglar that broke into the Gossam residence...wasn't it? If it was true, then it really is a strange connection, isn't it?"

At his assistant's words, Carlton brought his head up.

"What connection?"

"Well, do you remember that Dr. Gossam came as a guest to the university several times? He came to ask Professor about the legendary treasure."

Carlton was a professor of natural history, but he specialized in minerals. He especially knew about gems and jewels, and was currently trying to categorize not only the currently existing, but also ones that existed in the past, as well as ones that were in legends and dreams.

For example, the emerald that was thought to have brought success to Alexander, or Cleopatra's ruby that was said to bring the downfall of the owner, and to top it off, the mysterious Cassandra's crystal, the jasper of Salome, and the iolite of King Solomon.

This was only an attempt to comprehensively put together a list of the miraculous heritages created by nature, and nothing related to the currently

popular occult.

But he did periodically meet with guests from that area who had questions.

Carlton remembered the name Gossam who was one of those people. Now that he recalled, that man came asking about the location of the legendary star sapphire.

“Oh yes, that gentleman who was interested if the gemstone ‘Merrow’s Star’ existed or not.”

“Do you really believe it exists?”

“Well it is a legend. But apparently it did exist around 300 years ago. A man called Earl Ashenbert was said to have one. However he, well I don’t know if it was him, but in the story “Blue Knight Earl” by F. Brown, it only says that he left it in the care of merrows and disappeared. There’s talk that that book is fiction, so it’s not proof, and there’s record that the Earl remains overseas and hasn’t returned, so the gemstone may have disappeared along with him. For example, if it was on a ship that sunk, it’s now at the bottom of the ocean. The romantic creation of merrows may have come from that.”

But how could that be related to Lydia disappearing?

The burglar that broke into Gossam’s house went after Lydia?

Just when something was going to connect in his mind, the maid made another announcement.

“You have a guest who says he is the son of Mister Gossam.”

“What?” The professor ran out of the drawing room and personally invited in the guest.

The man introduced himself as the third son of Dr. Gossam, and after he sat down on the drawing room sofa, he said “Have you heard that my father was shot by a burglar and is currently in the hospital? I actually came to tell you professor, something about this incident is related to something important to you.”

“Is it about the merrow’s star?”

The third son gave a face like he was surprised. But he quickly tightened his face and nodded.

The burglar wasn’t after money, but was also interested in the ‘merrow’s star’.

Our father continued looking for the jewel by using the information he asked from you. And finally, he was lead to the mysterious riddle inscribed on the Earl's gold coin that he thought pointed to the hidden location, but that was also taken by the thief. The riddle contained names of various fairies, and so no one knew the meanings behind them, so just when father was looking for someone who knew about fairies, professor, he heard word that your deceased wife had been a fairy doctor."

Oh no, Carlton thought, and squeezed his sweating fist.

"And father found out that your daughter had taken up the fairy doctor business and was just about to ask for her help."

"Oh, I remember," interrupted Langley. "I met Mr. Gossam coinsedently on the road just a while back and was asked about professor's daughter."

"And you told him that Lydia was a fairy doctor."

"Well, uh, yes, but it was just something that came up in our chitchat.... But then again the last time I met your daughter was some years ago, so even if I was asked her description, I could only remember that her hair color was a rusty iron color," replied Langley, apologetically.

Even if his apprentice said so, it wasn't like Carlton was hiding his daughter so it wasn't his place to blame him.

"No, Langley, it's not your fault.And so you're saying that the thief also found out about my daughter."

"Regrettably, yes. So there is a possibility that your daughter may be in the hands of the criminal."

"Ah, yes, I was told that by the yard as well."

Giving out a heavy sigh, Carlton dropped his head. It was the worst situation.

The third son tweaked his brow.

"I see. But you cannot rely on the police. Currently my eldest brother had put a description of the thief in the paper all over the country and has put out a reward to gather any information. And so we would like to ask you, professor, for your help."

"I'll do anything I can."

"There was a witness report of your daughter and the thief like man getting on

a steam train heading west to Scarborough. If she was threatened by the bastard into finding the jewel, then would you know if there be any place your daughter may be heading in that direction?"

"But I'm not familiar about fairies like my daughter is."

"You know much more than we do, more importantly the safety of your daughter is at stake."

It was just as he said.

The third son showed him a paper with the riddle printed on it and a map. He said that the map was marked with places related to Earl Ashenbert 300 years ago who was said to have the 'Merrow's star.'

Where would Lydia have gone if it was her.

"So professor we'd like to ask you to accompany us in order to save your daughter."

"Of course I will come. Will you be leaving right now?"

"Yes, but the heading."

"Let's think about that in the carriage."

It was the first time for his apprentice Langley to witness Carlton making decisions so rapidly other than for his work.

Chapter 4 - A night by the sea

After getting off and on different steam trainlines, Lydia and the group finally arrived at a quiet town near the seashore. The Irish Sea was right in view, and from where Lydia was standing by the window, she could clearly see the ocean waters reflecting the round moon light.

But turning back into the room, she watched Edgar being poured a glass of wine by the owner of the house as he sat on a finely curved chair.

The owner of this house was a gentry of the town and completely trusted Edgar who introduced himself as Earl.

She was amazed as she heard him explain that we were attacked by thieves, injured, and were separated from our valet, and then how he asked for a doctor and new clothes. Then by mentioning how he knew the landlord's acquaintance who was an aristocrat, he managed to make a promise to spend the night at the gentry's house.

The landlord was delighted, saying that it was an honor to host an Earl.

"By the way my lord, were you going to Mannor Island? It's just a small island. There's nothing significant on it."

"That island happens to be mine. It seems that in my father's generation, no one had visited it, but since I've inherited the title, I thought I'd come and take a look at it with my own eyes. The estates we have are all over the country."

She wondered if the wound he had the doctor treat hurt anymore. He was told to refrain from alcohol, yet he was happily enjoying it. His glistening golden hair, which hadn't lost its shine even as he laid in the dark shack, was even more brilliant under the chandelier light.

On the other hand, Lydia looked down at her own hair. She didn't like how the indoor light made her reddish brown hair appear duller. She became envious of Edgar's blond and wondered why she wasn't born with either one of the bright colors of her parents. At least, if she was black, then she might appear smart, but with this dull reddish brown, she was just plain drab. Of course, even if she

was blonde, she couldn't create an air of grace like he could.

In this landlord's house in this countryside town, the numerous expensive furniture and art pieces normally wouldn't be able to show off their dignity and patronize their owner, but now, she had the absurd feeling like they looked as if they had been waiting for someone like Edgar to visit, and to think that was a disbelief to Lydia.

"Is that so. Please forgive my rudeness. By the way, I do remember that there was an old castle on that island. The rumour is that the ones living in it are all mermaids; is that castle also my lord's?"

Hearing the word mermaid, Lydia's ears perked up.

"Most likely that castle was built in the 16th century. I heard that the Earl at that time loved the peaceful island scenery and built that building. But mermaids are living in it? I never heard about that."

"Well, it is only a rumor. Since that island is like a treasure chest of mermaid legends."

"What kind? What kind of legends are there?" Lydia couldn't stop from interrupting.

The landlord was taken aback at her seriousness.

"Well, uh..."

"She has an exceedingly high interest in fairies. I'd like to know about it if it's about my island," said Edgar.

"Uh, well, it isn't that I'm aware of all the details, but anyone here knows about the mermaid story. It's said that those who hear their song will be enchanted and lured into the sea. The tides around the island are extremely severe, so every time a ship is sunk, the legend of the mermaids must have spread."

"It's hard to say that all the ship incidents were coincidental. Since mermaids are able to control waves and the tides. Furthermore, why are the Manor Island mermaids that normally inhabit the sea living in the castle? Is there any information about that?"

The more Lydia seriously questioned him, the more the landlord grew a confused and irritated brow. He must have thought that a full grown man shouldn't talk about fairy tales.

That was the normal response of people who've met Lydia. She was used to her words being taken as incomprehensible and irritating.

Don't worry about it. That was all she could think to herself.

But Lydia didn't have any information regarding the merrows. Honestly, she wanted to know all that she could.

"Was there someone who has seen mermaids in the castle?" asked Edgar, to which the landlord finally gave a reply.

"More like heard singing coming from somewhere deep in the castle, and the story is that when it comes morning, the island residents find dead bodies of thieves washed up on shore who broke into the castle. But, well, it's just groundless rumors about fairies and ghosts that only the childish would enjoy."

Being called childish, Lydia was furious. Just when she was about to open her mouth to retaliate, Edgar spoke up instead.

"I actually like groundless gossip. I really need to grow up."

Seeing the landlord troubled at his retort and not knowing what to say, Lydia felt a little better.

"Oh, no, no, I didn't mean it like that. Ah, my lord, if you will excuse me, I feel like I need a bit of a rest," said the landlord, standing up, eager to leave.

"Go right ahead," replied Edgar.

"Um, may I ask a favor?" asked Lydia.

Lydia decided to ask from him while she was upset.

"What is it?"

"May I make a pathway for the fairies here? Since this room is filled with them and they cannot get out."

Naturally, she was met with a wry face, but as for her, she couldn't be made any more upset than she already was.

"It's just a little game, landlord. If it is alright with you, could you let her do as she wishes?"

"You have quite the unique sister. Now, if you'll excuse me." Making that his sign of approval, the landlord left the room.

"Hey, what did he mean by sister?" asked Lydia, not able to look over his words, and turned to scowl at Edgar.

"If I didn't say that, a man and a woman alone together would draw unwanted attention."

"Brother and sister would make us more suspicious! There's no way we look like siblings!"

"Really? Then should I go correct him? Should I tell him we are actually lovers secretly hiding."

"Th-that's even more further from the truth!"

"Oh, you wound me. You don't have to hate me that much. Changing the subject. Are the fairies really lost?"

Lydia turned her head away and poured water into a glass with a lemon slice. With that in her hand, she walked to the corner of the room.

"Then that means, in your eyes, you can see a shuffling crowd of fairies in this room?"

"That's right. It looks like this room just happened to be where they pass through."

Edgar put the glass on the table. When he did that, he coincidentally avoided the spot where a fairy was laying down and sleeping.

Now that she remembered, he hadn't stepped on a fairy, not even once up until now. Even if he couldn't see, perhaps he must have a sensitive personality.

Unlike him, the landlord would sit down on them, squishing them down with a cushion, and kicked them aside as he walked. Seeing that, made Lydia want to do her part.

Most likely, the landlord must be getting the payback from the fairies every night.

Although he did seem to be the thickheaded type, even if his hair was pulled out, or he got purple bruises unbeknownst to him, he probably wouldn't realize how that happened.

Nonetheless, Lydia started with dropping a droplet of lemon water for the fairies by the windowsill.

She lined the droplets one by one as she inched from the windowsill towards the door.

Edgar came up to her like he was excited and looked down at the floor near the

wall curiously.

"Is that the guiding path? So that means there are fairies lined up right here?"

"Yes."

"What kind of fairies are they?"

"A species of brownies. They're brown and small, with a squashed face."

"Hmm. So would I be able to do it as well?"

"You want to give this a try?"

He smiled and nodded.

She handed him the glass of lemon water, and he dropped the droplets as Lydia guided him.

"Are they following?" He had a face like a playful boy.

"Yes. You can't see them, yet this is fun for you?"

"It's strange to imagine this. Is doing things like this also part of a fairy doctor's duty?"

"Yes, it is. We keep our eye out and make it easier for the humans and fairies to cohabit. If we aren't trusted by the fairies, then there is no way we can negotiate with them. And, just because no one can see them and they step on them and then get a payback from them is a pretty pointless cycle, isn't it?" Just by giving a little consideration to them, like tying a ribbon on your windowsill or door is enough to make them happy, but even those traditions have been forgotten."

She didn't know if he was really listening, but Edgar let out a snicker and dropped the last water droplet next to the door side.

Opening the door just a crack, Lydia watched as every single fairy marched out of the room.

"But you still think that fairies don't exist, don't you?"

"They have never appeared in my reality. They exist only in dreams. But, you must have a wider open view of reality than anybody else. Just like how a person with great eyesight can see far away. When I heard your story, I see it like that."

"...You're so strange."

It was the first time that she spoke the words that were always said to her.

"Oh, I'm sorry. Um, it isn't that I'm making fun of you, it's just, well, I was surprised. It was the first time someone introduced me to that kind of perspective."

"Oh?"

Once the noisy crowd of fairies had left, suddenly Lydia realized she was alone with Edgar. She was made aware of that because he was looking down at her with his focused eyes and they stood right next to each other since they worked on making the pathway huddled together.

And Nico wasn't here.

"I, I kind of feel like I've babbled on. I never talked about fairies so much like this other than with my family...., because, normally I'll be teased. Ah, but, you must think of me as a strange girl."

She became so embarrassed and kept talking, not wanting anymore awkward silence.

"I don't think of you like that," said Edgar.

"If you mean that, then you really are a strange person. But, remember how you didn't seem to dislike how I was talking about fairies to the landlord? It seems like that sort of thing makes me happy, unexpectedly. Thanks to you, I was able to say what I wanted. Normally, when I see fairies in trouble at other people's houses, I couldn't speak up, and yet, knowing that there's someone on my side, I feel a little headstrong. But, I'm fully aware that you are like that only to keep me in a good mood until we find the sword."

She slowly started to lose track of what she was saying.

"I'm perfectly aware that you're a liar, and even if you're just saying so, I know that you're just saying such things to make me feel better, but your acting nearly fools me. Because, just like now, it seemed like you enjoyed making that pathway, and I started to think that you were a kind person who considered my feelings."

Huh? What am I saying. It sounds like I'm confessing to him or something.

"Uh, but, don't be mistaken. I still don't trust you at all. It was just that, I wanted to say I was flattered, just a little. And, hey, stop touching my hair."

"It's so soft, like a cat's fur coat, yet it doesn't tangle, is that because fairies

frequently comb it for you?"

She wondered how he could come up with lines like that, but from how he smiled at her so soft and kindly, Lydia didn't know what to say.

"Fairies like blond hair. They're not interested in this rustic-iron color."

"Caramel."

"Huh?"

"That description suits you better."

She couldn't believe that just having this rude man, who was playing around with her hair, say something like that would make her not able to raise her hand on him.

"Is it sweet if I take a bite?"

I really can't be too careful around this man. Just as she was thinking that to herself, Lydia was confused, she didn't know if she was displeased or not about his interpretation.

There was a knock at the door.

Edgar shrugged his shoulders and stepped away from Lydia. He said "You can enter" towards the door.

Lydia let out a sigh in relief.

"Lord Edgar, I'm sorry for my late arrival."

The ones that were shown in by the maid was Raven and Ermine.

Edgar didn't seem to be worried about them even though he was separated from them.

It was clear that their destination was Mannor Island, so they kept on going anticipating that the two of them would find them, but she was still amazed that they really did catch up with them.

If they've been through close call battles together, they must have known how each other would act when they got separated.

"Ermine, Raven! You're alright?"

Edgar happily opened his arms and hugged the two like a father embracing his children. She could tell Edgar cared for them deeply.

They didn't seem to have a normal master-servant relationship. Lydia thought, the three of them are family.

"Miss Carlton, were you not hurt?" asked Ermine kindly, but Lydia slightly still felt left out of the circle.

"Yes, I..." She actually felt responsible for getting Edgar injured, and felt apologetic towards the two of them.

"There was nothing to worry about. I protected Lydia safely."

"Is that true? Wasn't it more like she felt danger towards my lord?"

"Now look, Ermine,"

"Was I mistaken?"

"No. But if you knew, then I'd hope the two of you would give us at least ten more minutes. It was just getting good."

"Oh, ten minutes was going to be enough?"

Aside from the two of their conversation, Lydia felt Raven's sharp eyes on her. Did he realize Edgar was injured? Did he realize that it was Lydia's fault?

"Um, I'm going to go get some rest. Goodnight."

Leaving behind the uncomfortable air between her and Edgar and the unnatural pounding of her heart, Lydia decided to escape from the room.

"Ermine, because you said something strange like that, now you made Lydia leave."

Hearing his words drifting away, she quickly sped out of the drawing room.



(Hey, did you see that? That was a fairy doctor.)

(Yes, it's been a hundred years since I've seen one in this town.)

(I heard her say that she was going to Mannon Island.)

(If she's going, then maybe that means we can go home too?)

(If the merrows are released, then we can go home.)

Hearing the whispers from the crowd of brownies, Nico stopped in his tracks as he was walking on his hind legs through the garden of the house.

"Hey, shorties. What do you mean going home?"

(Wah, oh, it's just a cat.)

"I'm not a cat. I'm the fairy doctor's partner."

(Whatever. If you're the partner of the fairy doctor, then could you tell her to help the merrows.)

"What's happened with the merrows?"

(They have been in grief for so long. Because the master of the island hasn't returned.)

(When the merrows grieve, it disrupts the sea. We used to live on Mannor Island and had been going back and forth between the mainland and the island, but because of the merrows, we've haven't been able to cross the sea. We haven't seen our family for three hundred years now.)

"That's unfortunate. But to save the merrows, wouldn't that be impossible unless it was the absent island master?"

(A fairy doctor should be able to solve human problems.)

"Don't speak such nonsense. Well, still, I'll tell her about the merrows. But in exchange, I want to know about the thing they are protecting."



(The thing they're protecting? What's that?)

"They should have been handed something from their master who left."

(Hmm, I think I've heard something like that. But we've been away from the island all this time. We don't know what's going on over there.)

Hmm, thought Nico, combing through his whiskers.

"You said you had family over there. Then I'd like to ask them some questions. I'll let you get on our boat, so why don't you come to the island with us?"

(On a human boat? Is it alright for us to get on?)

The fairies were thrilled and overjoyed. Even if the traditional charms to ward off evil have been nearly forgotten in this era, a boat was needed to go out onto the terrifying and untamable waters of the sea. There was protection in those waters to ward off fairies and evil spirits unseen to the human eye, and so they couldn't cross the water by using a human boat.

"I'll tell the fairy doctor about your request. In exchange, introduce me to your family."

The deal was sealed.

All that was left was to find out how many of the small fairies on the Mannor Island knew about the precious information about the merrows.

"Geez, Lydia really is blind to danger," mumbled Nico to himself.

She has never seen a merrow before, yet she is calmly resolute in facing them.

It wouldn't be a problem if she was accompanied by Blue Knight Earl, the real master of the merrows, but being a thief along, he couldn't tell what she was thinking.

"She really is a handful, geez."

Nico had been watching over Lydia ever since she was a newborn. He didn't plan on spending his days peacefully on the sidelines. He was going to support her from the shadows, or he planned to.

"It would be great if the merrows would just take the thieves to the bottom of the sea," he said, slipping into the house from the crack of an open window.

In a room with only the light from the hearth, Edgar was sitting on the sofa, alone, not moving at all.

He wasn't the same nonchalant man who was always teasing Lydia, he had a

serious face, the kind he wouldn't show her, thinking about what was ahead.

"Lord Edgar, it would be best to get some rest," said Ermin, entering the room.

"Why don't you have a seat. Would you join me for a drink?"

However, Ermine remained standing and worryingly said to him "Uh, there's something I would like to ask you."

He guessed what the questions she wanted to ask from how she asked so orderly.

"Ahh, is it about Lydia? Do you want to know how I was able to bring her along after we got separated?"

She knit her brows with a sad face.

"Don't make such a face. You know I'm a man who can do anything ruthless."

"You pretend to be indifferent. But you're always suffering from the decisions you make."

Edgar breathed out a small sigh.

"Don't worry, Ermine. I haven't done anything to Lydia."

"Is that true?"

"I couldn't. For some strange reason," he admitted, almost embarrassingly. And Ermine, still having a sad face, relaxed as if relieved.

"Then, Ms Carlton knows that we have been deceiving her, yet she's still helping us?"

"She doesn't have any intention to take part in a burglary. She wants to prove that it's impossible to get the sword unless it was the real Blue Knight Earl, and make us come to our knees in shame by showing us that reality."

Edgar rested his head on his palm, and smiled like he was mocking himself.

"Lydia is an interesting girl. She would appear like she was under my control and yet she's not. Then she shows me how soft-hearted she can be and how she doesn't have any other intentions than what she shows, and only says what she means. On top of that, it seems she can't abandon a criminal like me if I hang onto her and beg on my knees."

Not able to imagine such a scene, Ermine tilted her head.

"I confessed to her a little about my past. It was strange. Like I wanted to see what kind of reaction she would take."

"How did she respond?"

"She must have thought I lost my mind after getting my brain removed."

As he remembered, he chuckled to himself.

"But, she believed me, she believed in something more unbelievable than the existence of fairies. She said she hates liars. She must look past other people's flattery and lies with those mystical eyes of hers. But I'm made up with falsehood. A false name, a false life, everything is false. All there is to me is an earnest lie and a lie that's not. Probably those earnest lies are my truth, and she must have understood that."

To claim as the Blue Knight Earl was his last resort of an earnest lie. Saying that was the only hope left for Edgar and to say that he would die than give it up, was also an earnest lie.

"Then, you're planning to reveal everything to Ms Carlton?"

"No, I can't do that."

That was what he was mulling over just now. But however much he thought it over, he couldn't change his mind.

Lydia wasn't on Edgar's side. Even if she didn't go along with Edgar's plan and was staying with them at her own wish, that wasn't because she understood his objective.

It was the unchangeable fact that to Lydia, Edgar was still just a despicable criminal. In order for an imposter to get his hands on the sword, he had to rely on despicable options.

"I'm going to have Lydia solve that fairy riddle. Beyond that, whether merrows do exist or not, we'll go along with our original plan."

"Why? Lord Edgar."

"Why? Because. I'm not the descendant of the Blue Knight Earl. I'm just a thief. We need Lydia's help in order to find out the location of the sword, but her purpose ends there. We must get that sword at all costs."

He stood up and walked over to Ermine.

"Ermine, are you that worried about Lydia?"

"She's an innocent girl. So honest, and suited to walk on the peaceful side of society. I don't want to hurt someone so privileged."

"I know. Even for me, it's not like I enjoy dirtying my hands like this."

"But, even Lord Edgar has become attached to Ms. Carlton, haven't you?...That's why, even though she found out that you were an imposter, you revealed everything and spoke out to her sympathy then trying to use violence, didn't you?"

He curved up the side of his lips and narrowed his ash mauve eyes which were mixed with a sad blue and heartless red.

"You give me too much credit."

Just then, Edgar spotted a movement behind the curtain and turned his head to it. He saw a furry gray tail peeking through the shadows of the curtain by the window.

It was Lydia's cat.

Just as he realized that, he rushed over to the window and more quickly than the cat could dash off, he grabbed the scruff of the cat's neck, pinning him down.

"Nico, were you eavesdropping on us?"

The cat replied with an angry growl.

Even though he thought there shouldn't be a problem if a cat overheard them, however, remembering how Lydia was saying that this cat understood human language, he felt he shouldn't let him go.

And for some reason this cat seemed humanly.

Even if it was a stupid idea, Edgar turned the frustration in him that he didn't know what to do with, towards Nico.

He wanted to make sure he could act cold and heartless when necessary.

Walking over to the hearth, he attempted to throw Nico into it like he was fuel for the fire.

"Uow, stop, hey!"

"Lord Edgar, what are you doing?!" Ermine tried to stop him, throwing her arms around him.

Escaping from his grip just nearly, Nico jumped up onto the mantelpiece.

Edgar fell down onto the floor with Ermine and turned just his face up towards Nico.

"I was just kidding, Nico."

"I wouldn't think so, you'll pay for this!"

To Edgar, it looked like Nico vanished. But it may have just been that the cat slipped into the darkness.

Edgar let out a sigh. Still remained sitting on the floor, he stroked Ermine's short hair as she still clinged onto him.

She lifted her head and looked up at Edgar with sorrowful eyes.

"Sometimes, you purposefully try to act callous. Like you're trying to throw away the kindness and compassion in you."

"That's in order to protect you two. We can't survive unless I become indifferent."

"Please treasure yourself, not just for me or Raven's sake."

"I know."

Ermine's lips touched his. They quickly parted, but her body still leaned up against Edgar.

"...I'm sorry."

"There's nothing to apologize about."

"Lord Edgar, is there no way we can give up searching for the sword?"

He could tell that she had been mulling that option in her head. But for Edgar, it only looked like Ermine was losing her courage.

He understood her feelings, that she didn't want to bear any more sacrifices, but they couldn't bare to lose their way now.

"In order to get our freedom, we have to do this. If we give up, then we can never escape from that man's clutches."

"Either way, we might not be able to get the sword. And it might be better if we don't continue committing crimes for it's sake. I have the eerie feeling like we are never going to be able to really escape that man, like that's my destiny."

"Prince isn't indestructible. You're no longer his slave, but my dear friend. Forget about the past."

Ermine softly leaned away from him and knit her brows impatiently.

"Then, please make love to me."

Edgar hesitated from the pressured look in her eyes.

"Please make every part of me yours. It's not that I wish to become your lover. I just want to make sure that you are my master. Or else I'm terrified. Like I will always be chained to Prince."

"You're not an object. You're no one's slave. Your master will always be me even if we don't do such a thing."

"Really? Or do you just think dirty of me because I was Prince's woman?"

"Don't be stupid."

"Because, we are always by each other, and you know how I feel about you, yet you pretend not to notice."

Edgar pulled Ermine into his arms.

A pitiful girl. She was one of the young, beautiful female slaves that Prince owned. From when he became friends with Ermine and her brother and wanted to protect them, he resolved to become a different person. If there was anything his weak self could do, he wanted to help them.



He wondered if it was that difficult to grant her her wish. He pressed his lips against her white neck. Her arms softly wrapped around Edgar.

But just as he was about to touch her, he could feel the chain deep inside himself as well. Just as Ermine still felt chained to Prince, Edgar may be chained as well.

Edgar was Prince's possession, but his position was completely different than the other slaves. Because he was groomed to be the next replacement for Prince, the leader of that twisted, immoral organization.

He was pounded up with information of that man's thought process, how he made his decisions, his gestures and demeanor, every single one of traits. He was forced to learn everything that that man had learned. By covering that wide range of academics, he came to know that Prince was no ordinary man, but he wasn't given the chance to think who that man really was.

That unfair reality. Being cornered mentally and physically, being robbed of your own free will, and the feeling of slowly being molded into a different person. The fear of gradually forgetting who you were and what you were like. Ermine too, was brought before Edgar in order to learn how to become Prince. It was disgusting how they tried to teach him even those preferences.

But from that, Edgar realized the stupidity of the situation he was in. What the men around him were trying to do was like an absurd magical occult ritual.

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From there he convinced Ermine, who had given up on everything at that point, and attempted to rebel against the ones with power in that organization.

His first rebellion was going against their orders. That was why he never laid a finger on her. Ermine also didn't leak Edgar's insubordination to her superiors. Since then, he felt a strong trust bond between them and thought of her as a fellow ally.

Just because she had been Prince's woman, he never viewed her as beneath him. But he was certain he didn't want to take control of her like that man and so, even if they were a free man and woman now, if he took her to bed now, he

felt like that would continue Prince's domination, and that frightened him.

"I'm sorry, Ermine."

In the end, Edgar could only push Ermine away.



Lydia swiftly backed away from the door.

She dashed quietly down the dark hallway. She wondered why she had to be the one to running away, but after witnessing Edgar and Ermine together like that, she could only say that it made it awkward for her.

She couldn't hear what they were saying, but they were definitely embracing each other.

Are the two of them lovers?

If he did have a lover and he was still flirting with others, then he definitely was a rake.

"But it has nothing to do with me," said Lydia to herself, trying to brush away the disappointment that was in her for some reason, and was about to dash down a flight of stairs. But at the landing a dark figure stepped out.

"Ahhhh!!" she screamed, falling back down on her bottom.

"Pardon me, my lady. Are you alright?"

It was Raven. Lydia quickly stood up.

"Um, I, I was about to go to the kitchen. I thought some warm milk before bed would be nice."

She wasn't asked anything, yet she was rushing to come up with an excuse. She had the feeling like Raven was keeping an eye on her, like he saw her as a threat to Edgar.

Of course, it was natural if he hated her, after getting thrown at with hot tea, and getting injured, but after he'd say unsettling things with no expression on his face, and showed that he had combat skills far more dangerous than a regular street thug, she would naturally feel intimidated around him.

"Then, I shall prepare it for you. Please wait in your cabin room."

"Oh, no, that's alright. I don't want to be poisoned...., no, I mean,"

"Poisoned?"

He looked at her with sharp eyes. She remembered how he snapped a man's

neck instantaneously.

When they were surrounded by Huxley and his men at the train station, the victim was the man who stuck a knife to her throat. But, after hearing the hair-raising sound of bones snapping right by her ear and after the thought of whether she would hear that same sound when it happened to herself crossed by in her head, that thought horrified Lydia and sent her into a panicked state of mind.

"No, don't come near me, don't kill me!"

"I'm sorry."

"Huh?"

Met with a sudden apology, Lydia, surprised, looked at him.

"You're frightened of me. I apologize for not noticing that."

He said it in his usual expressionless face, but all of a sudden, Lydia felt extremely guilty.

She became worried if she hurt his feelings. Besides, it wasn't like Raven was going to do anything to her, yet she rushed to conclusions, raised her voice from her own made up fear and called him a killer.

Even at that time at the train station, he was just protecting Lydia from that scoundrel and his knife. Changing her mind, she called Raven to stop him, as he was starting to walk off.

"Um, I'm sorry. It was terrible of me to say such a thing. I didn't mean to criticize you."

He turned around to look at her with a curious expression.

"It's natural to be frightened of a murderer."

"But, it wasn't like you were going to kill me."

"And yet, Lord Edgar never deserted me, and taught me many important things, since I was ignorant as a baby. From then, I was able to grasp freedom as a human being. To serve my lord is my purpose. Because if I lose my master, my soul will fall under control of that savage spirit."

"Then Edgar doesn't have to be the one to rule you, couldn't anybody be your master?"

"Then, for example, would you be able to take responsibility for me? Would you

be able to carry all the crimes committed by a monster, who'd attack anyone when let free, and teach it what was good and evil, and tame it? And then, never give the order to kill anyone to such a dangerous creature?"

She could never be a beast tamer. But that meant that Edgar had taken up the task of carrying another human's life on his chest, on top of what Raven had just said.

Having the possession of a servant that would erase any one that got in one's way when ordered to do so. But to be able to never give such an order. Protecting Raven's soul like that, seemed kind, but it was also extremely difficult.

A perfect bond of trust, built on not demanding too much from one another. She thought that that must be the reason why Raven wouldn't hesitate to dirty his own hands, if it was for Edgar's, even if he hadn't given the order.

"Ms Carlton, it's natural to feel uneasy around me. That's why I ask you, please don't do anything that will cause trouble for Lord Edgar."

She thought, as she watched Raven walk off: Yup, either way, I'm still going to be threatened.

As a fairy doctor, perhaps, it was a much more difficult task for Lydia to prove the impossibility in Edgar and his group's plan, than how to deal with the merrows.

Perhaps it was a mistake to feel sympathy towards these people who had survived walking on the dark side of society, which was unimaginable to Lydia.

Spending time alone with Edgar, Lydia thought she had come to understand him just a bit. She realized that he wasn't a rotten person at his core, and he showed kindness and consideration that Lydia had never received before. She knew it was just a simple ingratiation, but he effortlessly saved Lydia from harsh or hurtful words that were aimed at her.

She thought that it wasn't a calculation of his but a fundamental part of his character.

But from witnessing him with Ermine and talking with Raven, Edgar started to become a mysterious person to Lydia again.

"Am I being deceived?"

"Ah geez, that's why I told you not to trust them."

She didn't notice that Nico had suddenly appeared, sitting on the stair railing with an irritated expression.

"Just as I thought, they are dangerous. Look at this, the end of my tail is burnt."

"Oh, my goodness, what happened?"

"I was nearly thrown into a fire by that idiot Edgar! It looks like I overheard something that they didn't want us to know about."

"Overheard? What?"

"I didn't hear them clearly, but it looks like they're still hiding something from you. In order to definitely get their hands on that sword, they're planning on doing something bad."

"Oh."

"Anyway, just like you thought, there are merrows living on Mannor Island protecting that sword. But the problem starts from there."

"Are you sure that they are protecting the sword?"

"The small fairies who came from that island said the merrows are taking care of something their master entrusted to them. And now they're longing for their master who hasn't returned."

"The landlord said the merrows are living in the castle. Which means, the sword is hidden somewhere in that castle."

"You know, Lydia, you don't have to face the merrows for their sake. You know that right?"

"Yes. ...You're right."

Either way, Lydia wasn't on their side. If Edgar didn't share the blood of the real Blue Knight Earl, then all she was left to do, was make it clear that the merrows wouldn't hand him somebody else's sword.

However, she didn't intend to back down from him and planned to face the merrows head on, but that meant Lydia will become involved in their strife.

"If it turns dangerous, we're left with only one option, to run. We're no match against merrows anyways."

Merrows are clever and beautiful creatures, however, at times they are deadly. They are the dark omen that appear above the ocean's surface before a storm.

They are also said to favor human souls and collect ones that have died at sea. Their temperament is much like a human's and there are cases when they befriend us, but there are clans that lust for blood.

But the biggest problem is their beautiful singing. Humans become captivated by it and enchanted, and are said to be lured to the bottom of the sea at the merrow's command, and there is no power that could match their magic, which was why they were so petrifying.

If they used their full-strength, humans had no way of defending themselves, like a little boat thrown out in the middle of a storm.

For the newbie fairy doctor like Lydia, who just had a little bit of knowledge about them, this would be the first time meeting them, and she didn't think she could manage a negotiation.

Ideally, she hoped that she could show the danger of the merrows to Edgar and have him give up the sword, but apparently he wasn't that simple a person.

When push-came-to-shove, she wondered if she was going to be left with the decision of abandoning Edgar.

(Caramel. That description suits you better.)

Just those simple words of his had already sank down deep into Lydia's heart, and she was worried if she would be able to let herself watch him die.

He was a criminal, and a liar, and a man who was still hiding something important from Lydia.

And yet, she thought, if she was able to convince the merrows, and make him Blue Knight Earl, she would be able to give him back the right to walk on the sunny side of society that was his position to begin with.

Like she would have such an ability to do that.

"They deserve to be drowned in the sea by the merrows. They're criminals. It would be good riddance for society to get rid of them," said Nico in a somewhat violent manner, perhaps caused by the bald spot on his tail.

Chapter 5 - The Blue Knight Earl and the island of the merrows

Mannor Island was an island that had prominent cliffs bordering along the ocean shores.

Seabirds were fluttering above the pale green island silhouette, which made it appear magical, like it was the fairy world, Ibrazel (Island of Happiness) of Lord Blue Knight, but from the turbulent waves that surrounded it, Lydia had gotten completely seasick.

The only ship that sailed to Mannor Island was a small fisherman's boat, and it swayed tremendously.

The waves around the island very violent throughout the year, and they were told that it was dangerous to cross the waters unless you were an experienced sailor. They finally arrived on the secluded island that only fishermen sailed out to, and by the captain's recommendation, headed to the only inn on the island.

"This is a medicine decoction, but it relieves seasickness," said Mr Tomkins, a man just past his middle-age who was the owner of the inn and warmly welcomed them.

"Thank you," said Lydia, half leaning up against the back of a sofa and accepting the cup of medicine.

"I'm surprised to see that only this young lady became seasick. It's rare for someone new to this island to be in the best of health after that kind of trip," said the inn owner, smiling towards Edgar and his group.

Lydia also wondered why the three of them were alright. She could understand if it was Nico, a fairy cat, but Edgar, and Raven and Ermine were calm and composed as they went across the waves that could nearly roled over the ship.

"Well, that must be because they've been through more near death experiences that could never be compared with a boat ride," whispered Nico, sitting beside Lydia.

"Nico, that's not funny."

"Oh, you're better already."

She managed to somehow gulp down the sour medicine.

"By the way, Mr innkeeper, isn't there a castle on this island?" asked Edgar.

"Yes, there is. If you feel that this inn is unsuitable, would you like switch over to there?"

Edgar gave him a cautious look.

If he was talking about the castle, there was only the castle, and that was the Blue Knight Earl's. Of course, their objection was to search that castle, but Edgar must have become suspicious of the innkeeper who suddenly allowed them to use it.

"Can anyone use the castle freely?"

"Of course not. It is the master of this island's castle. However, sir, coming to such a remote island like this, must mean that you are the descendant of the Earl family, am I wrong?"

Being told right on the mark, everyone remained silent, but Edgar alone made a smile.

"I see, you must have gotten endless visitations of imposters, claiming to be the Blue Knight Earl, to this island. No wonder you're so used to that kind of hospitality."

"By the way, my family has served as the Earl family's butler for generations, so if you are proven to be our true lord, then I will be serving you from now on. Pleased to meet your acquaintance," said the innkeeper and took out a key from his coat pocket.

"Here is the key to enter the castle. Please feel free to use it. We've had an endless number of people break the doors and windows, trying to find the legendary treasure, and the management got so out of hand that we've started to hand this out to those that claim to be our lord. And if you will excuse my rudeness, I'd like to mention that the number and type of all the furnishings and valuables indoors are accounted for, so please do not try to carry them out. You will need to remember that even if you wanted to, it will be impossible to carry them out of this island."

"That is indeed good work. If you were my butler, I'd be in good hands," said

Edgar, insolently.

"I'm honored. Furthermore, if you plan to leave this island, please don't hesitate to let me know. I will be happy to provide you a ship."

"And that's how you make some of them give up?"

"Unfortunately, as far as I know, the ones I've met have all washed up lifeless onto the shores within three days. So that doesn't happen, sir, I will be hoping that this won't be our last meeting."

"Um, so, does that mean that all the people who went to the castle end up dead?" asked Lydia.

"Yes, that's right, young lady. They must have been dragged into the sea by the merrows."

Lydia remembered being told by the landlord yesterday, that when one hears the merrows singing in the castle, it's said that their bodies are found on the shores the next day.

"Have you ever seen a merrow?" she questioned.

"I don't know any pure blooded merrow, but all the island inhabitants share their blood. That's why this island, from the old days, couldn't be handled by the landlord at the time, and it was ceded to Lord Blue Knight. We are told that the island residents, along with the merrows, happily welcomed their new master."

"Everyone has merrow's blood? So that means, innkeeper, do you have webbed feet and scales?"

"No, only a fin on my back."

"Impressive. Now that's a butler of the Blue Knight Earl family for you."

Lydia wondered if Edgar thought the man was joking. He only looked like he was fooling around.

"No wonder he smelled fishy," whispered Nico, quietly.



The green Jack will come from Spankie's cradle.

Dance with the pixies on the moonlit night.

Go beyond the Silkies' cross.

Be careful of the Pookah's maze.

Follow the Wyvern's foot marks.

Turn right at the Fear Dearg.

Go under the Dullahan's feet.

Search for the leprechaun's treasure.

Locate the sleeping bed of Clurichaun.

Follow the banshee.

Exchange a star for the merrow's star.

Otherwise the merrows will sing their song of lament.

The castle stood on an elevated cliff on the hill of the island.

The blue castle had a gothic architectural design with a steeple, and it looked down over the pale green island, making it seamlessly blend into the landscape.

It was a beautiful building, the perfect, ideal country manor house.

Lydia had finally recovered from her seasickness and had arrived at the castle with the others.

"So this is the merrow's island. Lydia was right on deciding this location. There's no mistake that the sword is in the castle."

Edgar looked over towards Lydia with a satisfied smile.

However, to Lydia, the real difficulty starts from here.

"Yes, this island is 'the green jack.' It's a green spirit covered in tree leaves. Looking at this island from the ship, I thought it looked exactly like a crouching leaf man."

"I see, so that covers the first part of the coin's riddle. And the next one, what's a Spankie?"

"It means will-o'-the-wisp."

"So we just need to look for a graveyard?"

"No, I think Spankie stands for the spirits of children who died before their baptism."

"So they wouldn't be in a graveyard, but buried somewhere else," said Ermine, and walked over to a gate left open.

The road that continued on from the gate, and even the garden that spread out on the other side of it was beautiful, it was unimaginable that the castle had been empty for three hundred years.

The people on this island must have been taking care of it for the sake of their master who they believed would return.

"But, this castle is a country manor house. Even if there was a child's grave, whose grave would it be?"

"I don't know. Although, these graves could have existed before the castle was even built."

"Or, it could be just a memorial stone."

Edgar and Ermine walked along side each other. Ermine was dressed in men's clothing, but even her plain clothing and hair cut to her shoulders didn't hide her radiating female beauty.

Looking at the two of them, walking so close that their shoulders could touch, Lydia remembered what she saw last night, and that made her be the only one in the group turning red in the face.

She wondered what happened between them after that. Were they together until morning?

"First thing is first, let's split up and look for the so called 'Spankie's cradle.' Lydia, you'll come with me."

"Eh?!"

She jumped up because she was suddenly called by her name. It was like he knew what she was thinking, which made her feel embarrassed.

"Why, why do I have to go with you?"

"Because, you'd get lost."

Raven and Ermine went their separate ways, heading off to different directions of the garden.

Most likely, the reason Edgar wasn't going to let his eyes get off Lydia, could be because Nico eavesdropped on him.

At the inn, Nico said he was going somewhere else and left their group.

It was Nico's idea to bring along a band of brownies from the mainland town onto the ship and bring them to this island, and it looked like he went with them to make sure they were able to safely meet their relatives.

While he was at it, he said he was going to collect information about the merrows of this island and what kind of role they had in protecting the Earl's

sword.

The brownies were fairies that lived on the same island. They may know something about the merrows that the human residents wouldn't.

If the small fairy clans were also the residents of this island, then they should have lived as the fief of the Blue Knight Earl, just like the merrows.

She was glad if her act of helping the fairies at that mainland landlord's house brought along any kind of help.

However, Nico wasn't as keen as Lydia in doing this job. He felt an extreme animosity towards Edgar. It wasn't only because he was nearly thrown into the hearth, but of the sole reason of the fur on his tail being burnt off. Fairies were beings that really were devoted to small trivial things and did not forget their grudges.

So he must be wishing that Edgar would get into trouble and heavily suffer. Gathering information must be for that purpose.

She wondered if Edgar realized Nico wasn't just an ordinary feline. Even if he didn't believe that cat's could talk, he still took caution and even became angry when the cat eavesdropped on them, and of course, was still taking precautions with Lydia as well.

If that was the case, she decided to be by his side like he wished and find out what he was hiding.

Taking a breath to build her bravery, Lydia decided to follow him.

"Hey, aren't you frightened?"

"Of what?"

"The fake Earls that tried to steal the sword have all been drowned in the sea by the merrows. You heard Mr. Tomkins say that they were all killed."

"If you ask me, I think they were fools. They must have fallen into the traps laid out to protect and catch the ones who came to steal the sword."

"So you're saying that it isn't the merrow's fault? And you're confident that you won't be the one catch by those traps?"

Looking over to her, he gave her a winning smile.

"If something were to happen to me, would you be sad for me?"

"Huh? Why don't you say that to Ermine."

"Ermine? Why?"

"Because....she's your lover."

For some reason, she felt like her voice was blaming him, which made Lydia embarrassed and lowered her head.

"She's not. So you can be relieved."

"Why do I have to be relieved about that!"

"Just hoping."

What is he thinking? Lydia thought, and tied a frustrated knot in her brows.

"Now listen, you should stop saying something like that to tease people."

"I didn't intend to tease. Then let's change the subject. What's your ideal type of gentlemen?"

He hasn't changed the subject at all.

She was frustrated because she knew that Edgar was joking when he acted like he was interested in Lydia, yet she felt herself moved by his words.

Maybe, that was because Lydia wasn't used to flattery.

"A serious and honest person. ...It's improper to hug or kiss someone when that person is not your lover."

"Hmmm, so that means, you were watching."

She cut her own throat by saying that, making her even redder. He watched her amusingly, but didn't tease her any further.

They slowly walked down the garden pathway.

"Ermine is a valuable friend to me. I want to do everything I can that would make her happy."

The side of his face that was facing straight was unusually serious.

He claims that they are not lovers. But even Lydia could tell that she was special to him. She wasn't someone he joked or teased with, and embracing her didn't have any lewd meaning behind it.

With Lydia's limited experience and imagination, she was no match against these people. But that could have been normal for someone like her, who could see fairies but didn't know how to befriend people.

"I see, so she was someone important to you. Um, it wasn't like I was peeking at the two of you. I just happened to pass in front of your room....I'm sorry, it

wasn't my place to say something like that. I still don't understand you at all, but, I think that the people by your side must be very happy."

Looking far off into the distance, he looked like he was deep in thought, but without changing his expression, he slowly turned towards Lydia.

"Are there wings on you?"

"Huh?"

It was such a sudden, strange question.

"I just thought you might be hiding beautifully colored butterfly wings on your back."

Just then, she felt a completely different feeling from when she was called a fairy's changeling.

Probably, he must have accepted Lydia as someone from a different world, by how she took people's words without doubting their meaning, and by not knowing how to keep up appearances before others, and by how she said things straight from her heart.

Although his lines were embarrassingly flamboyant, she didn't feel offended at being compared to a faerie, making her be able to accept how she appeared to Edgar's eyes, as a mythical faerie being.

When she was by Edgar's side, she would periodically feel like she could be reborn into a different person than how she was now. Even if she tried to think of him as evil, there were mixed feelings inside Lydia every time she tried to convince herself.

When he seamlessly stopped at a random spot, Lydia also stopped.

In the corner of the garden there looked to be something like a small shrine.

There was a small angel statue placed on it. There was no mistake that it was the grave site for children.

"It says [This is for the mermaid children resting here in peace]. It looks to be like a memorial stone, but I wonder what it means by mermaid children."

"You remember how we were told that there was merrow blood running in many of the island people? This must be the children who couldn't survive because the merrow blood in them was too strong. And if it was in the old times, then they probably couldn't even get baptised."

"I see. If it was a secluded island like this, then all the island residents would be related. If consanguineous marriages continued, then I can understand how there would be certain diseases and deformities that started to appear."

"Are you saying that it's not because of the merrows? ...Well, I don't know the whole truth, but the island residents believe in merrows. Aren't you intending to become the fief lord of those lands?"

"Does the lord have to believe in fairies to be qualified? I don't think that matters. Whether it is mermaids, or diseases, if there are scales or fins on the island people, then that's just how it is here."

How it is. He doesn't believe their tales but accepts them as who they are.

She felt like she just heard something unimaginable.

He doesn't believe it if he can't see it, but if even though it looks like scales and fins, he says he has no trouble in accepting that as reality. Lydia gazed up at Edgar in wonder.

Humans who don't believe in fairies, don't acknowledge the beings they can't see them, but instead, choose to believe that they don't exist.

That's why, they reject those that can see fairies. However, according to Edgar, he himself doesn't believe in the existence of fairies, but he doesn't mind if they do exist.

That's why he doesn't make fun of Lydia.

"....Perhaps, is that how you think of the spirit inside Raven?"

"Raven? Ahh, did he talk to you about that?"

"Yes, he said it was a terrifying spirit, and he was born under its control."

"Hmm, that's rare. It looks like Raven has taken an interest in you. It must be because you also have a deep connection to fairies."

There is no way he likes me, thought Lydia, but she kept her mouth shut. She was only given a warning not to do anything that would give trouble to Edgar.

"I don't know if there really is a sprite inside Raven. I only need to know what kind of person he is, and what he needs, and what there is I can do."

That's why he took on the responsibility of the sprite as well, Lydia thought, he really is fearless.

But that could also mean he had a strong heart. No matter how the world was

still unbeknownst to him, he still had imperturbable self-possession. His clear-cut attitude was to just do what he can do.

For someone to have a clear, strong grip on to reality might seem easy, but was actually very difficult. Because people's hearts were easily frightened and corrupted, there were chances for evil spirits to take advantage of people like that. But if it was someone like him, then the evil spirits wouldn't be able to influence him.

Even if he couldn't see fairies, suddenly Lydia hoped that he could be the real blood descendant of the Blue Knight Earl.

If he was, then she would be eager to help them.

"Anyway, there's no mistake that this is the Spankie's cradle. Which means, the next thing is 'Dance with the Pixies on the moonlit night,' what does this mean?"

"Ah, umm, I think it means the fairy ring that's made by the pixies. On a clear moon night, there are marks left on the grass when the faeries dance."

"A ring, huh, something like that?"

Edgar pointed to where there were stones were lined up in a circle on the grass a ways away from them.

"Yes, yes, I think so."

When they approached it, Edgar took no caution and boldly took a step inside the ring.

"Ah!"

Lydia gave out a scared yelp, to which he turned around.

"What is it?"

"....Nothing, it wasn't a real fairy ring."

"What would have happened if it was?"

"Sometimes people would get taken away by the fairies."

"Hmmm, that's interesting. But, more importantly, Lydia, look at that. The scenery changes if you stand here."

Lydia cautiously stepped into the circle. And then, the trees that she thought were randomly planted in the garden grounds, all lined up to make a straight clearing. Beyond that open clearing, they could see the building that had been

hidden by the tree branches.

On the castle building, there was a doorway that stood like it was welcoming them.

No, coming closer, it was just a painting of a doorway. There was just a window built in the wall to pass the light through.

"Now there's no way to get in."

"In any case, the key we have only opens the front door. We'll enter from there and search around the location on the other side of this wall."

The two of them was just about to turn to head that way.

The nearby bush suddenly moved unnaturally.

The ones that appeared from behind it were men dressed in black suits.

First came out the Gossam brothers, in their group there was Huxley who stood in front of Edgar and Lydia, blocking their path. He turned his head to scan around them, and after making sure that Raven and Ermine were no where in site, he grinned victoriously.

"Hello, John, we meet again."

"You really are persistent," said Edgar, raising one of his brows to show his irritation.

"It seems like the 'Merrow's Star' is somewhere in this castle. We'll take it from here and find it. So it's best you don't resist and release her."

"Release her? That's strange of you to say."

"You kidnapped Ms Carlton. And now you're forcing her to come along with you. A thief has kidnapped the daughter of an university professor! That's how society sees you."

"But did you know Lydia, if you were captured by him, who knows what he would have done to you. Don't you think it was better to have come with me?"

"A burglar had no right to say such a thing! Ms Carlton, you shouldn't believe what that man says."

I wouldn't believe either one of you. Lydia was a little amazed at the nerve of these two men be able to play like they were innocent.

"Raven, over here!" yelled Edgar, all of a sudden. Huxley and his men went into

a cautious stance, scanning around them.

There was no wind blowing, yet the trees around them gave a ruffling, moving noise from their branches. Just as they all were eyeing to find the source, one of the men at the corner of the group gave out a yelp and fell to the ground.

"Bloody h**l, don't be daunted! It's just one man."

"Lord Edgar, this way."

She didn't notice that Ermine was standing right behind them. She lead Edgar and Lydia into a small dirt road. They were just barely a few yards away from Huxley and his men when,

"Lydia!"

The voice that called her was very familiar to her. The one that was running over in her direction was her father.

"Father! why are you.."

"I was told that you were kidnapped..."

Lydia took a step out with her arms out to her father, but Edgar stopped her by grabbing onto one of her arms.

"Are, are you the kidnapper? Let go of my daughter!"

"It is a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Carlton. I really have been in great care thanks to your daughter."

Edgar spoke calmly and greeted him like this was a sunny day in the park.

"What are you after? I'll do anything you want. Just don't hurt my daughter!"

"I'm terribly sorry for causing you to worry. But I'm serious about her. Please, Father, allow me to have your daughter's hand."

"What in the world are you talking about?!"

He kept going, and grabbed Lydia's shoulder, pushing her right up next to him.



"I understand I should have properly gone to you first for your approval about us. But I had gotten so crazy about her, and lost track of myself."

"Huh?"

"If she wasn't by my side and didn't calm the heat of my love, I would die in a heartbeat."

Could there actually be someone, who after saying something so embarrassing, that would get away with this?

"Wait, wait just a moment..." Paused Carlton.

Lydia's father, who appeared to be in a disorderly state that even his daughter had never witnessed, kept opening and closing his mouth.

"....Do you really want a hoyden like her?"

"Father!"

"She is the most precious woman to me. She is the only woman who can save me with her deep love."

"Hold on right there Edgar, you're making this sound completely different!"

What was going to save him, of course wasn't Lydia's love, but her ability to find the sword.

"Well, I won't disagree that Lydia is the perfect daughter. However, young man, don't you think it's irresponsible as a man to drag along an young, unwed woman, because you can't control yourself?"

It seemed like Carlton was nearly on the verge of collapsing from this situation turning from coming in contact with a kidnapper to meeting a bachelor who was head over heels about his daughter.

"Yes, I agree. I regret my carelessness."

"This is all wrong!" cried Lydia.

"John, let her go!" yelled Huxley.

Huxley appeared in their view again, and to Lydia, frankly, he appeared like the savior to this chaotic situation. Of course, that was only just her mere imagination, because Huxley was pointing a pistol towards her.

"Hold on, you're aiming near Lydia."

"I understand that perfectly, Professor. However, that man also can't allow your daughter to die. Because he's a stubborn, greedy little thief and he hasn't found the jewel yet."

"Gossam, I can imagine what you must have said to convince Mr. Carlton, but you shouldn't do something that would reveal you'd do anything ruthless to get your hands on that jewel."

When Edgar glared at Huxley with a smile like that, his sharpness and gracefulness became even more prominent.

In that moment, he made it seem like he was the obvious winner if this were to be the site of a duel.

"Hurry up and release her," barked Huxley, in an irritated voice. Carlton looked up at both of them worryingly.

Perhaps to try intimidate Edgar, Huxley put his finger on the pistol's trigger.

"Hey, you, don't!" cried Carlton.

The pistol that was aimed towards Edgar, was also pointing at Lydia who was right beside him. Trying to stop that, Carlton grabbed ahold of Huxley's arm.

"Ermine, guard Lydia," whispered Edgar.

"Yes, my lord." With a simple reply, Ermine pulled Lydia's arm. The last thing Lydia saw was Edgar pulling out the rapier from his walking stick. At the same time, she heard a gunfire.

She wanted to look back, but Ermine pulled Lydia into the bushes so she didn't know what happened beyond that.

However, as soon as they came out to a different dirt path, Ermine stopped in her tracks.

She stood in front of Lydia, guarding her, and started to take some steps backwards, but they were completely surrounded by Huxley's brothers.



Lydia, along with her father, was locked inside a room in the castle. Huxley's men had taken the extreme measure and broke one of the building windows and entered the castle, taking up the position in the corner of the castle. It looked like they were attempting to corner Edgar and Raven who had managed to escape, and steal the 'Marrow's Star.'

Carlton was deceived by Huxley, well, actually the Gossam brothers, and was brought here by them, and after finding that out, he breathed out a dispirited sigh.

"So that means Gossam was using me."

"Father, I'm sorry to get you involved into this."

"No, you were dragged into this as well. I should apologize. I'm sorry, I didn't know my gemology research would cause something like this."

Who knows what the cause of all this. It could have started from when Gossam tried to use Edgar as his research experiment, or when Edgar decided to use Gossam. However, that wasn't a problem at this point.

Lydia walked over to Ermine who lay slumped on a sofa.

Lydia and her father weren't hurt because the brothers must have thought the two of them weren't a threat, but Ermine was punched and kicked, and now her hands were tied-up and she lay unconscious.

She wanted to untie her ropes, but Huxley said that if she were to do something like that, then he'd beat-up Ermine even worse.

Lydia used her handkerchief and wiped the blood on Ermine's bleeding lip.

"So, about that young man earlier..."

"No, it's not what you think, Father, he was just fooling around, I just accepted a job offer as a fairy doctor to help him."

"Oh, thank goodness. Are you sure it isn't an elope?"

"Of course it isn't! I'm not that kind of daughter."

Relieved, the professor made a faint-hearted smile and pushed his round spectacles up that were low on his nose.

"Even if he is a thief, to be called 'Father' by a kidnapper, is too much on my weak heart. If it was true and you were serious, I was worried if it was right for me to disapprove."

"Oh, my goodness, father. Are you saying that you wouldn't mind my courter to be a thief as long as I chose him?"

"I figured that he must have had a very good quality about him. Of course, it would be troublesome if the only good part about him was his looks."

"I would never choose my husband just by his looks."

"There's one thing that bothered me though..., isn't he an aristocrat?"

"Yes, that's what he claims, and looking at the way he talks and how he acts, everything about him makes him look like one. But, father, are you saying it's a problem for him to be a nobleman than a thief?"

"At times, they can be more dark and twisted than mere burglars. ...Although that can just be my prejudice. But, well, it doesn't matter if he was just joking."

"He is serious."

They didn't realize when she had woken, but Ermine had opened her eyes just a crack and interrupted them in a faint whisper.

"Lord Edgar is serious when he says he needs you, Ms Carlton. He is willing to love you if that's necessary to have you do as he wants."

If she didn't know his true background, then maybe Lydia could have happily enjoyed the sweet dream that Edgar would have showed her, and completely believed it and willingly come under his control.

"Ermine, I already know. That I'm a tool to find the sword for him."

"No, Ms Carlton, there are still things that we're hiding from you. Perhaps, it

was lucky for you to be captured by our enemies like this."

She lowered her eyes like she was stricken with a deep sadness.

"I don't want Lord Edgar to become a heartless, cold person... He really is a kind, compassionate person, but he has thrown away his heart for our sake, and I can't bear to keep on watching him deceive and hurt other people anymore."

Nico had said that Edgar was still hiding something from Lydia, maybe this is what he meant.

"What is Edgar planning to do with me, Ermine?"

Ermine frowned like she was stricken with a headache, but she sat up, and with a pressured look, she finally opened her mouth.

"There are two versions of the information regarding the Blue Knight Earl's sword. There apparently were many copies made of that gold coin, the one that you saw with the fairy riddle on it. That probably was the reason why there were so many visitors to this island who were after the gemstone. But the other is a key, made of silver. Most likely, there are no other copies of this, only one exists. To be qualified as the Earl's descendant one must have both the gold and the silver. We were also indicated that in order to get the sword we needed one final thing. Blood."

"Blood?"

"The sacrifice for the mermaids, or, as Lord Edgar thinks, we need to sacrifice someone or we won't be able to receive the sword."

Merrows are said to collect the souls of humans, like humans collect jewelry. It was possible to interpret that they'd request a human soul from the Blue Knight Earl descendant as reward for guarding the sword.

"Then...., are you saying, he planned to use me as that sacrifice?"

Lydia brought both of her trembling hands together and made a tight fist.

That big fat liar! What is the meaning of this!

Anger boiled up inside her.

Well, it wasn't like I trusted him, but if he was planning to do that from the beginning, then how miserable was this.

That meant there wasn't one bit of truth in any of his words.

Losing her strength from this depressing news, Lydia slumped down onto a

chair.

"There is no gimmick or trick behind any of this. Merrows do exist. It's wrong to think you'd win the sword as long as you've met the conditions. If you aren't the true Blue Knight Earl, then all that's waiting for you is death."

"Then that means it's even dangerous for Lord Edgar to continue to looking for the sword. That's why, I..."

"Yes, Ermine, that's why you told me the truth."

You must really love Edgar. Lydia reconfirmed Ermine's feelings as she looked at the woman's face that was tense with resolve.

"Either way, it's not like we're able to escape from here, so we'll have no chance of meeting the mermaids," said the relieved Carlton.

She didn't know how much her father understood what Lydia and Ermine were talking about, but, he must have wanted to unravel the tense atmosphere between them and so he feigned as ignorant.

"But Gossam is after the star sapphire that's on the sword. So that man also needs the help of Ms Carlton. Of course, Lord Edgar would have no intention of backing down. That's why, I thought now was the chance to tell you everything. Even if telling you meant my betrayal to Lord Edgar, as long as he would give up the sword, then..."

The door slammed open.

The eldest Gossam son, Huxley, came striding in and stopped in front of Lydia.

"Ms Carlton, I'm sorry but we are in a little bit of a hurry and I need you to come with me."

It looked like Ermine was right about her expectation.

"I don't want to. I'm not going to help you steal the legendary sword." "Oh no, I'm going to have you help me whether you want to or not. I can't guarantee your father's safety if that man were to get his hands on the sword before us."

"...Hey! are you saying you're holding my father as hostage?"

"There will be no problems if you listen to what we say."

There was nothing else Lydia could do.

"If you get the sword, will you let us go?"

"I promise."

“Lydia..., you don’t have to think about me.”

“It’s alright, Father. I promise I’ll come back.”

Not allowed a farewell embrace with her father, Lydia was immediately showed out of the room by Huxley.

The ones that accompanied Lydia, was Huxley and three of his younger brothers. His other brothers must have remained behind to keep an eye on her father and Ermine. Or they could be looking for Edgar and Raven.

However, Lydia thought that there was no point for Huxley and his brothers to look for Edgar.

Because she knew where he would appear.

She walked, heading to the south of the building, towards the spot Edgar and she was at earlier in the garden. The place with the window on the wall. From there, they should be able to see the fairy ring on top of the grass hill that she found with Edgar.

“Hey, are you sure this is the way?”

Huxley had his hand gripping Lydia’s arm so she couldn’t escape, and in his other hand he held a pistol. He must be taking precautions against any sudden attacks from Edgar or Raven.

“Why don’t you just quietly come along? You won’t be able to tell the difference anyways.”

“What a sassy girl. If you dare to trick us, you’re going to pay for it.”

“I can tell that.”

She thought this man was an open book and much more honest than Edgar was. He didn’t go the roundabout way of putting Lydia in a good mood and be thinking of killing her.

If he was going to only use her from the beginning, then he should of just played the villain from the start, and forced her to listen to him by frightening or blackmailing her.

Then, I wouldn’t be this hurt, thought Lydia.

Am I hurt?

Even though she said she didn’t trust him and even though she didn’t want to give a hand in his robbery, she was so happy when she felt he understood her

purpose of being a fairy doctor.

That's why she felt like she could convince him that it was impossible for him to get the merrow's sword.

Their goals were different, and there was no way they could become allies, but she was hoping that he felt the same as she did in that she wasn't able to hate him completely.

But that was just Lydia's imagination.

She opened a door at the end of the corridor which opened up to a hallway built like a wellhole. It was strangely built, with stairs crossing and overlapping each other. From the corner, she could see the daylight coming through a window from outside.

It was the spot where the door was painted on the outdoor wall.

Huxley became even more cautious and pulled Lydia closer to him.

The dark hall only had one window, and looked as if there could be anything looming behind the stairs or behind the pillars.

"Brothers, search the back," he ordered to his younger siblings.

But, there was no reply or noise from them who should have been behind them.

Huxley's face turned cold and he turned his head around to see that the three of them were lying on the floor.

Just when his eyes were looking down, Lydia felt the air beside her move. Just then, Huxley was flew away from Lydia and his body slammed down onto the floor.

Still lying on the floor, he lifted up his arm that held the pistol, but that arm was pinned down to the floor by Raven's foot.

He grabbed the pistol away from Huxley and aimed it back down at him on the floor.

"Wait! he has my father as a hostage! If you kill him, they'll kill my father and Ermine...!"

But Lydia's voice didn't reach his ears, as he looked down with his cold, expressionless eyes and aimed his mark in the middle of Huxley's brow with his finger on the trigger.

Those eyes were the eyes of death; they made those who saw it realize that it was useless to beg for mercy.

“Raven, that’s enough.”

Edgar’s voice came from the stairways in the back as he slowly walked towards them.

At his master’s order, Raven lowered his arm. But at that same time, he gave a powerful kick into the pit of Huxley’s stomach, knocking him unconscious.

“Lydia, I’m so glad you’re alright. I knew you would come back here again. Of course, I expected that there would be some company.”

His golden hair sucked in the light and made it radiating. His beauty was perfect and his smile was dauntless.

I won’t be fooled anymore, thought Lydia to herself.

“But the situation has gotten bad even for you. If I don’t find ‘The Merrow’s Star’ and hand it over to Huxley, my father will be killed.”

“So you’re saying that we must compete for the sword against each other.”

To find the sword, Lydia needs to solve the riddle and get the silver key that Edgar was carrying somewhere on him. Edgar shouldn’t know that Lydia knows about the key, it looked like she would have to pretend she was cooperating and then steal the key at the last moment.

“But, Lydia, Ermine is also captured. Doesn’t that mean that both of us see them as enemies and make us on the same side? There is no need for you to give them the ‘Merrow’s Star.’ I think I’ll be able to help you rescue your father.”

She couldn’t believe that Edgar would be worried for a stranger like Lydia’s father’s life. As long as he got the sword, he was sure to abandon her father.

Since, he was the kind of person who was going to sacrifice Lydia.

But for now, Lydia nodded.

“The problem for now is if we can really find the sword,” said Lydia.

"Let’s get started with the next fairy. What does the ‘Silkie’s Cross’ mean?"

Going up the stairs, Lydia walked by Edgar’s side and further on. After passing several doors, she finally stopped in front of the door with the mark she was looking for.

"I don't see any cross on it?" said Edgar, puzzled.

"This design is a mountain-ash tree. The door is also made of it. Silkies are ghost-like fairies, and they hate crosses made of mountain-ash trees."

When she opened the door, there was a narrow passageway beyond it.

The three of them hurried on.

It wasn't that difficult for Lydia to follow the path according to the fairy riddle.

If one was a fairy doctor and had the routine knowledge as one, then this was not that difficult to solve.

But the sword was supposed to be inherited by the Blue Knight Earl's descendant, so it would be a problem if anyone could find it if they knew about fairies.

Looks like the problem lies ahead, where the merrows are.

"How was Ermine?" asked Edgar, as they continued walking.

"She's alive. But, you know how good she is using a weapon, and so they tied her up."

"I see."

He looked worried as the side of his face clouded. She sneaked a glance over to Raven to see how he was, but she couldn't tell at all how worried he was about his sister from his face.

"...She was worried about you, Edgar. If you try to steal the sword, who knows what kind of dangerous traps there will be."

"But, if I am able to inherit the title of the Blue Knight Earl, then Ermine and Raven won't have to live back to back with danger. Especially for Ermine, then she would be able to dress like a lady, and grow her hair, and wins the hearts of many men. Then she would be able to find a man she could completely trust."

But she only has eyes for Edgar.

"Isn't there another way? Wouldn't it be simple if the person who is after you would just give up? Since unlike America, it's illegal to own slaves in England."

"In these days, the only thing that can defy power is power. He isn't that easy a man to defeat."

There was no way Lydia could picture what sort of terrifying man Edgar was talking about. Only that, more than just trying to escape from him, Ermine was

more terrified of Edgar sacrificing someone.”

Lydia could relate to those feelings of hers.

They were definitely approaching closer to the hidden location of the sword.

However, Lydia still didn’t have an idea of how to counter Edgar.

Was she really going to be able to outsmart him and take away the sword? If she couldn’t, then just like he anticipated, was she going to become the sacrifice to the merrows and her soul taken out?

Or, for Lydia to win against Edgar, would that mean he would be the one to die? That would mean Lydia was the one who killed him.

“Be careful of the Pookah's maze

Follow the Wyrms' foot marks.

Turn right at the Fear Dearg.”

One by one, solving the riddle, they walked on.

“Lord Edgar, please wait,” said Raven, suddenly.

He took a few steps ahead of them and focused his ears to pick up anything around them.

“There’s someone approaching us.”

Eventually Lydia was able to hear the sound of footsteps growing louder.

There must have been a different route, it was the squeaking sound of feet going down stairs. Not before long, the presence of those footsteps approached a door that was by them.

Raven moved without making a single sound, and stood ready by the door. Edgar drew Lydia over to the side of the wall.

Just when the door cracked open, Raven slammed the door open with his foot. He slipped into the next room through the open doorway and grabbed the stranger. He pinned his arm around the person’s neck.

“Raven, it’s me.”

He was stopped just a second before he was about to pierce the person with his knife. Seeing that it was Ermine, he slowly unraveled his arm.

Relieved, Edgar took the tension out of his shoulders.

“Ermine, you were able to escape.”

“Lord Edgar, I’m so sorry.”

“No, it’s alright if you’re safe.”

“Uh, how is my father...?”

“Only I was taken to a separate room. I used that opportunity. So, I think your father is still there as a hostage,” she replied, apologetically, and walked over to Edgar.

“The Gossam brothers will eventually come after us. If they find us in this narrow passageway, then we can’t move. I think it’s better if we move to a more open space.”

“But this is the way to the location of the sword. We’ll continue this route.”

It looked like Edgar had no intention of taking a detour. He urged Lydia on and they continued to walk on.

“We’ll only guide them to the location of the sword.”

“We need to find it before that happens.”

It appeared like Ermine was discouraged to go because of her feelings of not wanting Edgar to get near the location of the sword. But she didn’t object to Edgar any further.

“This isn’t like you, sister,” whispered Raven to her, which reached Lydia’s ears

“Yes, I know, to be caught like that,” said Ermine.

“That’s not what I meant,” said Raven, and didn’t open his mouth after that.

Ermine had revealed important information to Lydia. Could it be that her brother had sensed the unrest in her from doing that?

There was a strange painting of someone with no head. Lydia squatted down and inspected the wall below it.

“This is painting of Dullahan?”

“Yes, it’s a fairy without a head. And if we search its footing, ah, see, the wall opens up.”

Lydia crawled through the opening. There were stairs that lead further downward.

Climbing down the stairs, it was a dead-end which opened up to the outdoors. They were on a terrace that leaned out over the ocean waves.

The island was originally situated on a cliff along the sea. It looked like this was the steepest place on the island out against the sea.

Beyond the simple railing, there was only the dizzying view of the ocean waves against the cliff straight below. The strong, coastal winds roared mercilessly.

"It looks like it's a dead-end?"

Just like Edgar pointed out, there was no way to go further from here. But on the other hand, there was no other paths that branched off from the way they came.

The next phrase was 'the Leprechaun's treasure.'

"Leprechaun's are faeries that sow shoes. They're said to hide their treasures in basements."

"Basement, huh. I hope it doesn't mean that we're suppose to jump from this cliff."

If we were to do such a thing, there'd be no mistake that we'd die. Since directly below them, there was the rough ocean currents that smashed up against the rocky cliff walls.

Lydia concentrated and thought about the meaning behind the riddle, but after leading them here and becoming suddenly staggered, she had to confess that she was stumped.

"Wait for just a bit. I need to think this over."

"If they reach us here, we'll be cornered," said Ermine with a worried expression, looking back behind them"

"Let's wait a while."

All of them fell silent. Lydia was still in deep thought. She dugged through her head, trying to remember the folktales about Leprechauns.

After some time, Ermine spoke up again.

"Lord Edgar, it was hopeless for us to think we could get the sword. ...I don't mind if I have to run in fear of being captured by Prince for the rest of my life. If you say doing this is for Raven and my sake, then, please, let's stop here."

"Ermine, don't be stupid. You know best of the horror of Prince. Didn't I promise that I'd free you from his clutches?"

Ermine lowered her eyes as if in deep thought, but eventually raised her head.

"Lord Edgar, I believe that will be impossible," she said and looked over to Lydia."

"Prince knows my wish and weakness. He knows that I find happiness in being able to abscond with Lord Edgar... To be able to share the same goal, to be able to help one another, and to have an insular friendship that doesn't allow anyone else to break-in. He knew that I the happiest woman to be the only one in that circle and keep Lord Edgar to myself. If we were to be freed of Prince, that would mean you and I would just have a common master and servant relationship. He figured out that that was the thing I feared the most."

"...Ermine, what are you,"

"I am so sorry, Lord Edgar. I was told that if I continued to keep my eye on you, then he wouldn't do anything to us for the time being."

"No....., then Prince knows?" said Edgar with chagrin in his voice.

When he said Prince's name, even Lydia could sense the clear hatred and resentment steaming out from him.

She could tell Edgar and Ermine were talking about the man who made them his slaves, but it wasn't only that, it looked like for them, this man was someone who brought out the mixed negative emotions of hatred and fear in them.

"Are you saying that all of our movements were being directly passed on to him?"

"When you were about to be executed in America, it was your idea to use Gossam who was looking for a human subject for his experiment. But it was Prince who was the one who tell me about Gossam. And like that, that man will always rule over us. I can see how he enjoys watching us struggling to get free."

"...Then he must have known about this sword as well? And yet he's spectating us from above."

"Yes, he knows. It seems like he thinks that the sword doesn't really exist. However, with Ms Carlton's help, you are undoubtedly making your way closer to the sword. And if you're able to find it, then you might be able to cut your ties with Prince. But that means you will find out about my betrayal to Prince. That's why I didn't know what to do. If you would give up the sword, then I would be able to be by your side for just a little longer... But, more than that, I

don't want to put you in danger. Lord Edgar, to press on any further from here is for ones like us that are unrelated to Lord Blue Knight is reckless. I will take any beatings as a traitor. The only option we're left with is..."

All of a sudden, Lydia was taken into Ermine's arms.

"Miss Carlton, please only hate me for doing this,"

"Stop, Ermine!"

By the time Edgar yelled out to her, Lydia's body was pushed beyond the railing and pulled down towards the rocky cliffs.

Her hands searched for something to cling on, but there was only Ermine's body, and even she was trying to fall down with Lydia, so her effort was pointless.

The view of the scenery flipped upside down.

The sky inched down as she felt the sea inch down on her, and just when she felt sick from that long, long second, her body was suddenly pulled.

Raven had just barely able to grab hold of her sleeve.

At the same time he had grabbed Ermine's clothing, and it looked like he was having an extremely hard time trying to not let both of them fall. On top of that, her sleeve looked like it was about to rip apart. Lydia desperately tried to reach her other hand up to grab the handrail.

The one to grab that hand was Edgar.

"Raven, I'll got her."

He took a strong hold of Lydia's arm and carefully pulled her up.

As she was pulled into his arms and the both of them fell back onto the terrace, Lydia unconsciously grabbed onto Edgar, and felt a warm relief wash over her as he stroked her hair to soothe her worry.

"Raven, what are you doing!"

But she came to her senses at Edgar's high voice.

Raven had just barely been able to get a hold of Ermine's arm. But he wasn't trying to pull her up.

That was because Ermine was trying to untangle and shake off her brother's hand.

"Please, Raven, set me free."

Even if she was saved, she won't be able to be by Edgar's side. Only Prince's curse would follow her.

"Don't let go, don't you dare let her die!"

Edgar had taken one step over to them.

In that moment, her arm slipped through her brother's hand.

Her body fell down to the bottom of the cliffs in a blink of an eye.

Lydia closed her eyes.

There was no painful cry, only the strong sounds of the ocean waves, and when she opened up her eyes again, there was only the tall, white crest of the waves that washed up against the rocky walls as if nothing had happened.

Edgar slumped down onto the terrace floor.

Chapter 6 - The two keys and the sacrificial blood

"Lord Edgar, please forgive me," said Raven in his usual indifferent voice and kneeling down on one knee.

But even Lydia knew that he wasn't apologizing because he inevitably couldn't save Ermine.

He let go, for his sister.

For his sister who chose death, he went against his master's orders.

Raven was suppose to have put the spirit in him in Edgar's hands, so she thought that it must have been a very strong resolve for him to defy his master's orders.

"You're forgiven." That must have been why Edgar acknowledged his clemency. Still slumped on the floor resting his elbows on his legs, Edgar buried his fingers into his golden hair, and to Lydia's eyes, he looked like he was trying to suppress the fuming rage in him.

Most likely he was aiming that rage at himself.

"I am the one that needs to apologize to you, Raven. I wasn't able to accept Ermine's struggle. Even though, I could see that she was distressed," he uttered. Following that, he murmured in a long breath that was barely audible "I should have taken her as she asked."

He must mean about last night, thought Lydia. At that same time, she remembered Edgar saying that he wanted to do everything he could to make Ermine happy.

It was Ermine's one-sided love. But even she should have known that Edgar thought of her as his family.

Even though, this was too much of a sad ending.

"In the end I am still Prince's slave. It is not a simple task to unravel the cursing bind the memory of when that man was everything and absolute to us. I feel like at the end of the long maze of our escape from that man, he would be

standing waiting for us just when we were about to find the exit. However many years passed, that nightmare never left me. Even I was like that, so for Ermine who had lived as his woman, there must have been a deeper pain, and fear and worry always plaguing her mind."

To feel like you were losing yourself, despairing at the life of living like a doll, that feeling could only be understood by those who went through the same thing.

Lydia couldn't imagine what it must have been like to live under the capture of that man named Prince and how they suffered because of him. But she was able to understand Ermine's feelings just a bit.

Lydia felt she could understand Ermine's true feelings, the feeling that were never controlled and deeper than her betrayal.

If she was able to take Lydia unwillingly with her, then there was no need for Edgar to kill Lydia. Eitherway, Ermine wouldn't be able to be by Edgar's side as a traitor. Until Edgar was captured by Prince, or until her betrayal was revealed, their escape was only a brief runaround.

It was a faint love that was meant to come to an end.

That's why, now, at this spot, she decided to end everything.

Edgar stood up, slowly like his body had become a heavy weight.

"Give me some time. I'll be right back."

Lydia watched his back disappear into the building; it looked so weak, like he was going to disappear.

If what drove her over the edge was him going after the Blue Knight Earl's sword for her sake, then this was all just wrong.

Edgar only wished for her to be able to live like a normal girl, growing her hair out, dressing up and be smiling.

"You're crying, for my sister?" said Raven and Lydia finally noticed there were tears streaming down her face.

"Even though she tried to kill you." She wondered if Ermine really tried to kill her. That puzzling thought passed by her. If she was planning to do that from the start, then there would be no need for Ermine to spill Edgar's plan to her. If she revealed everything to Lydia then she must have thought of the possibility

that Lydia would survive and manage to guide them safely to the location of the sword.

She tried to have Lydia die with her, but if she was truly going to kill her, and if she knew Raven's speed, then there should have been an alternative that was more successful.

If they continued, and they didn't get the sword, then Edgar and Lydia would both end up dead. And Ermine could no longer continue betraying Edgar and wouldn't be able to escape from Prince.

So she chose death.

Her only wish was for Edgar not to sacrifice Lydia, and to have him change his feelings, and even if they weren't able to get the sword, she hoped they would be able to find another way to get their freedom. Or so Lydia imagined.

And in order for that, she could have decided to cut herself loose, as the tie between Edgar and Prince.

"Even though I only knew her for a few days. I feel like I know what she must have felt," You must be in more pain and sad than me."

"Sad, do you really think so. I don't know if I am. At times, it is so difficult for me to comprehend what I am feeling. Even about my sister, the only sense I had about her was that she was my only family and she was someone who was always by my side and we helped one another and that someone like that wasn't never going to go away. I should have known she was a person too, with worries and concerns and troubled because of those, yet I am always at my limit at just understanding myself," he said, in his normal indifferent, cold manner.

"No, you do understand. Because, you have a heart. If you let her go because you thought of her pain, then that means you were the one who loved her the most, and deeply hurt."

His dark green eyes turned toward her. She still thought they were such a dark color that made people anxious, but right now, she didn't feel the sharp danger that could harm either of them.

"Miss Carlton, did my sister say anything to you?"

"Uh, what do you mean?"

"No, there is no need to answer that. Please keep it to yourself." Raven must have realized that Ermine told Lydia about Edgar's real plan.

But he was Edgar's servant. He must have decided to shift his efforts from worrying about his master committing anymore crimes to trying to make his wish come true.

Even if that meant setting the trap to put Lydia in.

"Lord Edgar isn't trying to gain the sword for himself. The only thing on my lord's mind is his Noblesse oblige. That is all."

It was as if he was trying to vindicate his master's position.

But she could understand.

Noblesse oblige. The duty of a lord to protect and lead his subjects, their families and his people. From the times of the feudal lords, the social class where the spirit of chivalry had been passed down through, were not just a life of luxury, but as someone who stood above others, there was a heavy duty and responsibility that came along with it.

It was a position from the times of war and battles that did not allow one to abandon ones' subjects or people.

Edgar came all this way, fighting for the sake of Raven and Ermine. But most likely, right now, he still wasn't planning on backing down.

"Lydia, would you come here." Edgar, who had returned, didn't show signs of agony or heartache, but like nothing happened, called for Lydia.

"Wasn't it gold that the Lephreachauns hide in the basements?" he said, as he guided Lydia behind the staircase.

"Yes, that's right. But, what happened?"

"Remember the Blue Knight Earl's golden coin? This. This coin that has the faerie riddle on it. And here, see how there's a hole in the wall? It's the same size as the gold coin."

"You're right!"

"Shall I put it in?"

Lydia nodded.

The coin slipped through the hold and dropped down through an thin opening in it. At that same time, there was the sound of ticking and turning, and then

the stairway began to move.

Eventually, a large dark hole on the floor before them. In it, there were stairs that lead further down.

"Let's go."

Following Edgar's lead, Lydia stepped down the stairs. Behind her came Raven. If they kept on going, then that meant danger was approaching Lydia. But in order to save her father, she needed the 'Merrow's star' so Lydia could only keep walking.

Lydia felt the group effort as Edgar and she both worked to solve the faerie riddles one by one, and by doing that she started to sense an undeniable excitement building up in searching for the sword together with him. However, on the other hand, she thought about Ermine's actions, by exchanging her life to try to stop Edgar from continuing to sacrifice other people was proof that Edgar was seriously going to let Lydia die.

She wished Ermine's feelings of not wanting to commit anymore crimes had reached him.

But as she hoped for that, she felt denied of her wish by Raven's presence right behind her.

Without a doubt, sentimentality like that wouldn't be able to waver these two men's resolve.

Raven realized the meaning of his sister's death and her wish, yet he still decided to follow Edgar. And Edgar, must be resolved to go through with his nobles oblige even for the sake of Raven.

But just like them, even Lydia had someone she wanted to protect. Her father. Going against these two who had survived through more life-threatening encounters than she has, she knew that a naïve girl like herself was no match, but she was only left to press on.

"Oi, why, if it isn't Professor. What are you doing here?"

The voice came from inside the room that Carlton was locked in. But there should have been no one else besides him in here.

He was puzzled and looked around the room, and saw that there was a gray-haired cat sitting on the windowsill.

Yes, it was a cat wearing a necktie, sitting on the windowsill like a human.
"Nico... Of course he knew that this feline wasn't any ordinary cat."



He knew, yet it always felt out-of-place to witness such a sight.
"Lydia has been taken by Gossam and his men. They're going to make her search for the gemstone."
The cat jumped down from the window and walked over to Carlton on his two hind legs, and cleverly crossed his arms, or his front legs.
"What happened? Last time I saw Lydia, she was with that blond noble."
To tell the truth, Carlton had to always fight the urge to want to pick Nico up and inspect and test him, but even though he had the body of a cat, if he was a gentleman as he claimed to be, then it would even be rude to stare curiously at him, so Carlton reframed yet again.

Nico was Lydia's mother's partner, and had watched over Lydia ever since she was a young child.

So he also knew Carlton for a long time as well. For Carlton who wasn't able to see faeries, Nico was the only faerie that he was able to come in contact with.

"She was, but she was captured by Gossam. I was also tricked by Gossam, and came along with him to find Lydia but...either way, Lydia is heading towards the hidden location of the sword."

"This is bad."

"It's bad? I was told by a woman dressed like a man that that nobleman would sacrifice Lydia to the merrows."

"Yes, in the promise between the merrows and the Blue Knight Earl, if you weren't the real descendant of the Earl family and got your hands on the sword, then apparently that means you will only come out dead."

The sound of approaching footsteps made Nico close his mouth. And then he vanished.

At that same time, the door slammed open. The eldest Gossam brother entered the room; he was in a poor state, one could tell by first glance that he was punched in the face.

This man apparently introduced himself as Huxley to Lydia, and with an obviously irritated look like he was venting his anger out on Carlton and kicked the chair.

"Your daughter has been kidnapped by that thief again."

"Uh-huh, eitherway, that doesn't change the fact that I'm still in bad situation."

"As long as you're in our hands, your daughter can't allow the Merrow's star to fall into that man's hands. She would try to get the gemstone like we ordered, but that man is sly. He isn't someone that your little girl can handle."

"It looks like you can't handle him either."

Huxley's brow gave a twitch, but he contained his anger.

"Either way, we're going after him and getting that gemstone. And you are coming with us."

The second and third son went on either side of Carlton and pulled him up to his feet.

He searched for Nico, but he didn't see him. But he must be somewhere near me, he thought.

"It looks like we don't have time," said Nico.

"Okay, I'll go ahead of you. Professor, keep this with you."

Hearing only the cat's voice, Carlton saw there was a mint leaf that flowed into his inner pocket.

"The brownies should follow that scent."

"Oi, what are you mumbling?"

"Nothing, just talking to myself." Letting out a sigh, Carlton followed the men out of the room.

Carlton didn't argue against his daughter when she said she wanted to become a fairy doctor like her mother. But because she didn't hide the special gift that she had, she had become involved in a dangerous incident like this.

He worried about Lydia in how by inheriting the ability to see fairies, how that would put her life through unwanted hardships and troubles. More than that, the biggest problem of her being like her mother was that she was weak against men who couldn't do nothing on their own.

A man who was an aristocrat, and a thief and kidnapper; Carlton imagined in his mind of the man who was probably with his daughter now, and that miserable thought made him downhearted.

The stairs went down and down, like they would never stop. The underground passageway had curved passages and stairs that alternated after another, and if they didn't have a candle with them, it would have been pitch black.

Perhaps anticipating that there would be an underground chamber, Raven had a candle with him. Lead by that light, the three of them pressed on.

"Does it still go on?" Lydia was starting to feel out of breath in that trapped, insular space.

As she took a step after another, it felt like she was nearing the horror finale. In truth, she still wasn't able to come up with a way to steal the what it was that Edgar had with him that would grant them the sword, and she was literally being carried to where she's be sacrificed.

Being in this dark underground passage must have made her start to think like

that.

The human-made space they were in didn't show any signs of life and that made Lydia even more anxious. She wondered why the faeries that fancied the undergrounds were no where in sight. There being no sight of them also built up the unnatural impression onto her and increased the worry in her.

They could be in the area that was under the merrow's control, but she never even met a merrow so it was only another increasing factor to Lydia's anxiety. Her resolve to save her father was disappearing, and unwanted negative ideas kept on coming up in her mind.

Right next to her was Edgar, and behind was Raven; there was no where to run. She knew she was going to be killed by them, and yet she wondered why she was coming along with them.

She felt even more suffocated.

Edgar turned around to her. For some reason, that made her flinch.

"Lydia, are you tired?"

"Do you feel like the air has thinned out?"

"The fire is lit fine. There should be no problem," uttered Raven.

As she hear Raven's voice, Lydia felt dizzy and light-headed, and losing the balance on her feet, she fell to the side.

Edgar caught her and held her up. She couldn't tell what he was talking to her about.

"No, don't touch me."

She just didn't want to be touched right now. But that only made her more out-of-breath, and cold sweat run down her. She was in complete disorder.

"Calm down, Lydia."

If she tried to made a ruckus, her hand would be held down. On top of that, her nose and mouth were blocked by his hand, and she couldn't breath.

What's happening? Am I going to be killed?

Lydia became even more desperate and struggled to get free.

"Stay still and let out a breath of air slowly."

But I out of air right now.

If she tried to thoughtlessly fight-back, her foot slipped from the stair step.

She fell down the stairway in Edgar's arms.

"Ahhhhhhhhhhhh!"

Surprised at the sudden fall, she let out an ear-splitting scream with all her might. By doing that, she must have been able to let out the air that had built up in her like a ball of lead, and Lydia was able to relax a little, because she didn't feel out-of-breath anymore.

"That's right, don't hurry, and breath in-and-out slowly."

In the darkness where the candle light didn't reach them, she heard the voice of Edgar who had her in his arms. It looked like they fell only a few ways down.

The stairs that looked to have no end, had apparently ended right there.

"Lord Edgar!"

"I'm fine, Raven," said Edgar towards the candle light that was fastly approaching them.

"Lydia, are you all right?"

"Y-yes...."

Of course she would be, since Edgar had taken the impact of their fall.

"Ah, are you?"

"I'm perfectly fine. Thank goodness it was only a distance of a few steps."

When the candle light reached them, he let go of Lydia, and kindly smiled as he looked down at her with a caring expression.

"Do you still feel out-of-breath?"

"I feel a little better."

"It looks like you had taken in too much air. You must have been anxious and being in this overbearing darkness must have tired you out."

Being told so, Lydia realized that she was struggling with more nervousness than she could handle about herself.

"No one would feel alright after something like that. I'm sorry to force you pass your limits."

She could tell he meant about Ermine. Lydia was also about to fall at that time. Even that was a shocking experience, but more than that, there was something else that was making her nervous.

She was terrified of what was to come.

Of the worst that was going to happen to her.

Again and again, Lydia was saved by Edgar.

When Huxley was about to attack her, he stood in her place and got injured because of it. Even when Ermine was about take her along with her suicide, and even just now, he had saved her.

He always worried after Lydia, and spoke to her soft and kindly. She knew perfectly well that he wasn't to be trusted, and yet she must have come this far because she wanted to believe in him.

That's why, she wasn't scared of dying, but terrified of being killed by Edgar.

Imagining what sort of cold, merciless eyes that he would look at her with made her shiver.

Edgar was someone who accepted Lydia, who had been called an oddball and not understood by anyone, as who she was, and she felt that he complimented her not having any flattery behind his words.

But if she were to be killed by him, then the kindness and smiles and compassion that were given to Lydia would all mean they were lies.

When she found out Edgar was a thief, Lydia tried to run from him. He knew that and yet he didn't try to force her into submission using violence. He just pleaded that she don't leave him, claiming that he needed the help from her as a fairy doctor.

Didn't that mean he respected her wishes and rights?

From that time Lydia wasn't used by him but felt that she was on the same level and cooperated with him, but that wasn't the case.

What she feared the most was Edgar overturning everything.

Lydia clinged on the hope that perhaps that such a thing wouldn't happen and kept walking on.

"It would be better to take a rest."

Even those words of his weren't really him being compassionate, but might eventually be denied.

Lydia fixed her eyes hard onto Edgar's ash mauve eyes.

He must be used to having women look at him steadily and so he looked back at her with a soft smile.

"Are you going to kill me?" she couldn't stop herself from saying that.

He didn't react with surprise, or look away, but kept his eyes onto hers, which petrified.

"What are you saying suddenly."

"If you're planning to kill me, then don't be nice to me. Be the villain and show off your knife and make me do as you say by shouting or hitting me."

"Are you still disordered?"

"This is unfair. I can't see you as a villain and so who am I suppose to blame when I'm killed? I wanted to be a help to someone as a fairy doctor. I thought that even if you were a thief and liar you really needed my ability and that's why I came this far..."

"I do need you."

"And you also need my life, don't you?"

"Why would you think like that? There is no reason for you to die."

"I'm not a member on your side. You wouldn't be hurt if you cut loose of me or my father. That's a perfectly good reason."

Edgar looked as if he was troubled and lowered his head to look into Lydia's eyes as he combed his fingers up through his front bangs.

He seemed like he was thinking about something, and then made up his mind and reached out his hand towards Lydia.

He hesitated at her flinching in reaction to his hand, but he didn't give up and reached out to place his hand on Lydia's head.

He stroked her hair with his hand soothingly, as if he was trying to calm down a small child.

"Like you said, we've done everything we could to protect ourselves. I considered myself a fighter, but I'm really only a pathetic man, and only could think about running away. I was scared, so I didn't look at what was behind me, trying to forget about my past, and so I wasn't able to realize that I hadn't completely escaped from that man. That's why....I paid a big price... I don't want to hurt anyone anymore. I think of you as my comrade. Please believe me."

If she was told that with straight eyes, she almost believed him.

But, everything was surely a lie.

He was a person who could make a lie seem serious.

Mixing a little hint of truth, he would manage to make a huge lie. And just like that, he would move the hearts of people. He was aware of how he appeared to other people, and it was his forte to grab people's hearts.

But all Lydia could do was just be deceived. To be deceived and betrayed was her only option, and she realized that there was nothing she could do about it by how Edgar's lie was all too serious.

His resolve to obtain his goal was firm and unswayable.

"Please, I want to save my father."

Then at least, Lydia wanted him to hear just one of her serious wishes.

"Of course, I understand."

She prayed that those words of his were lies, and she gathered up the strength in her body and stood up.

Beyond the door was a wine cellar. But one could tell it wasn't a wine cellar for humans. To have it situated in such a deep underground place, meant the person who built the castle had it prepared those that lived down here.

The wine cellar was the sleeping bed for the wine-loving faerie Clurichaun. She didn't spot the Clurichaun-like resident there at all, but she was sure that the riddle was pointing to this location.

From somewhere beyond the walls they could hear the sound of water.

The sound of waves, and most likely, there was the artery of the underground water running out to the sea near-by.

If the dwellings of the merrows were close, then this might be the wine cellar for the merrows.

And in the back of the cellar, there was a road that separated into three ways.

"Which one should we take," uttered Edgar.

"I will go check what it is in them. Please wait here," offered Raven.

He lit the lantern that had been left hanging on the wall, and that light brightened up the inside of the cellar much more brighter than the one candle and made the large open space took away the feeling of being in a dark entrapment.

That's must have been why Raven decided not to take Lydia along with them

into the narrow passageways and instead offered to go look by himself.

“Be careful,” said Edgar clearly.

Raven disappeared into one of the passages, and the bored Edgar started to tap the wine barrels that were lined up.

“It looks like all the barrels are empty.”

If the lord of the castle was gone, then that must of meant there was no one to offer the merrows their wine.

Lydia went over to the wall and sat down with her back against it. Then she felt something furry sweep by her chest.

“Lydia, it’s me.”

The whispering voice was Nico. Nico, still remaining invisible, jumped up onto Lydia’s lap.

“Listen to what I’m going to say. The brownies that live on this island said they were told this from a male merrow that they drank with. The merrows are tired of waiting for the Earl who hasn’t returned for hundred of years. At this point, they’re wishing that someone would be able to take the sword. The brownie told the merrow that it would be a problem if anyone took it, but the merrow said [It’s alright as long as that human has met the same conditions of the promise they made with the Earl to exchange it with the star.][Star, as is a star from the sky?][The ones that shine in the merrow’s sea are the souls of the humans that died at sea.] By meeting the conditions, he must have meant that the human reaches the hidden location of the sword. And if that human sacrifices another human life to the merrows, then even if they were a thief, it means there is a chance that the merrows would hand over the sword.”

What goes on between faeries and humans, most of the time, the most important thing is the contract. Sentimental feelings and obligatory duties are only considered important between humans. Even if the merrows accepted the Earl as their lord, that was only the result of the contract held between Lord Blue Knight, and the only reason they are protecting the sword is because they are under the contract.

They wouldn’t dare break the contract. However, they wouldn’t do anything more than what’s stated in the contract. If the way to verify how was the Earl’s

descendant was if that human had the gold coin and silver key and that they reached the sword's hiding place, then for the merrows, they wouldn't doubt the identity of the person who came to claim the sword.

Lydia made sure Edgar wasn't looking at her, and made a small nod. Nico spoke on.

"So the hidden sword is close, right? If you find it, make sure to get it before that aristocrat does. And use it to cut him."

Eh? She nearly let out a gasp, but she managed to hold that in.

"That's the sign for the merrows. It's fine as long as you can cut his skin just a little bit. The blood that touches the sword would apparently become the one to fall victim to the merrows. In no time, Huxley and his brothers will reach here with the Professor, so it would be convenient if they made a disruption. While that aristocrat is busy dealing with Huxley and his brothers, you have to make sure and find Lord Blue Knight's sword and take it, do you understand?"

She felt the soft, velvety hair of Nico touch Lydia's hand, but he vanished in an instant, since Edgar was walking over to her.

"Do you hear something?"

"Huh, no, nothing...isn't it the sound of the water. It's constantly making that sound."

As she tried to dodge his suspicion, Lydia also listened closely to the water sounds, and then Edgar spoke up again.

"There, I just heard the sound of a girl's cry."

"Crying...? That's it, it must be a banshee."

Lydia stood up.

The sound they faintly heard could have been the wind running through the rock walls. But it did sound like a Banshee's cry as well.

It's said when one sees the sight of a Banshee crying by water, that soon someone would die. The eerie faerie cry was said to be the premonition of someone's death.

She had to cut Edgar with the sword. That was the only option left for Lydia to save herself.

She wondered if she would be able to aim a weapon at someone. But if she

couldn't do it, then he would aim that sword at Lydia.

"When you say Banshee, that's the next faerie in the riddle."

"Yes, that must be the hint."

Lydia pressed her ear against the wall and listened for the spot where she could hear the sound of the wind the loudest. That sound came from the middle opening out of the three passageways.

Just then, Raven returned from the passageway on the right.

"This one was a dead-end."

"It's this way. I think this is the right way to go."

The three of them walked on yet again.

The road didn't go that far. After walking for a while, they came to a crevice-like opening in the dark rock walls and there was a bridge suspended between, and after they crossed that, they saw that there was a door built into the rockface.

Lydia was about to approach the door, when Edgar stopped her.

"Next after the Banshee is the merrows. Then we should take more caution from here."

"Caution of what?"

"Weren't we told that all who got near the sword ended up dead? There must be traps laid out beyond here. And look, you can see part of a wheel here."

Like he said, you could see there was some sort of device built into the rock wall that the suspension bridge was connected to.

Edgar took out a card from the inner pocket of his coat. It was made of a thin sheet of silver. One side of the sheet wasn't flat and had random bumps on it, and she noticed that there was something craved on it's surface just like the riddle that was on the gold coin, but she couldn't tell what exactly it said. Perhaps it was the thing Edgar was hiding that Ermine said was related to the mystery of the Blue Knight Earl's sword.

"What's that?"

"The magic key to open this door."

By the doorknob, there was a slight indentation that was just the right size to fit the silver slab into. So it was the keyhole.

Suddenly, they heard the boisterous noise of footsteps from the direction of the

wine cellar. In the distance, there was the light of a lamp hovering over a number of dark figures, and as they were neared their location, the light lit up their faces and shined over to their standing.

“John, hold it right there! You’re not going to have your way any longer!”

“I’m really starting to get tired of seeing your face, Huxley.”

“Hey, go catch him.”

Still taking caution of Edgar and his insolent attitude, Huxley gave out his order to his brothers.

Still keeping his eye on the brothers that were cautiously approaching him, Edgar stepped over to the door.

At that moment, there was a deep roar that erupted from somewhere around them. The Gossam brothers stopped in their tracks. The roaring sound echoed against the stone wall’s hollow cavities and sounded like it was getting closer to them.

“.....What in the world.....?”

The murmur of one of the men turned into a scream just when a sudden wind hit them.

“It’s the merrows, the magic of the merrows.....,” gasped Lydia.

The suspended bridge swung violently and nearly threw off the ones that were clinging onto it.

Along with the wind that didn’t hint of dying down, there was the sound of singing voices.

At first one would think it was just their imagination, but it wasn’t like you heard the singing, more like the voices were ringing deep inside your body. The voices sounded so mystical and soothing, making those that heard it fall to sleep.

Barely managing to hold on to the suspension bridge’s rope, Lydia felt her body begin to slump down.

Just when Lydia was thinking about the many lives of the thieves who fell from here and washed up dead on the shore, Edgar grabbed her arm.

“Lydia, Raven, come over here. Hold onto the door.”

Going against the wind, Edgar pulled the two of them to him. And then swiftly

he slid the silver slab into the crack of the door.

Abruptly, the violent winds died out. At the same time, the singing merrow voices stopped.

Edgar pulled Lydia, who was stunned and slumped down, into the door he opened up. At the same time, the wheels to the contraption started to move.

Without allowed any time to figure out what was going to happen, the middle of the suspension bridge came apart.

What was left of their side of the bridge was sucked down into the black bottomless hole. Huxley and his brothers swiftly jumped back onto the other intact side of the bridge.

But one of them that had made his way too close to the side they were on, decided he wouldn't be able to go back and jumped over towards the door.

"Ahhhhh!"

Lydia screamed because the man who had nearly fallen down had grabbed ahold of her ankle.

Edgar put his arm around Lydia's waist and making sure that she wasn't going to be dragged down, used his foot to knock off the man's arm who was desperately trying to climb up.

"Don't touch her, you dirty low-life."

In a blink of an eye he had kicked him off.

The fallen man had just barely grabbed onto the rope of the bridge, and dangling in mid-air shouted cursing words up at him, and Lydia was in utter shock as she watched that happening, and thought that Edgar was surely a frightening man.

He lived in a world where you do not give mercy to your enemies.

Lydia, who wanted to believe that he really wasn't a bad person and swallowed his kind words whole and was quick to sympathize, must have looked utterly unguarded to him.

She wasn't beginning to lose hope that she'd manage to steal the sword and swing it at him.

"Hey, don't forget what could happen to the professor!" yelled Huxley from the other side of the rock wall separated from the fallen bridge and the deep, dark

hole that was left between them.

“Father!”

Huxley pulled Carlton out in front of him.

“Young lady, make sure to bring me that gemstone. Or else I’ll shove him down from here.”

Edgar must have judged that it didn’t matter how Huxley bickered, since he was so far away he couldn’t touch them, and didn’t give him anymore time and started to head in the opposite direction of the door.

“Wait,” begged Lydia and scrambled to grab his arm.

“Please save my father; didn’t you promise?”

“Even if we handed him the gemstone, I wouldn’t think he would hand over your father in one piece. Even you would be a witness to his crimes. The both of you would be killed.”

“But, at this rate.....”

“We haven’t gotten the sword yet.”

Edgar looked straight ahead like he didn’t have time for what she was asking for.

They were in a wide-open, natural, cave-like place.

The rocky bludges in the wall were in the way so they couldn’t see past them into the back, but they could tell there was something lighting up the inside of the cave.

One might think that the light from outside was shining through, but that was wrong. There was something giving off a glowing light.

Edgar slowly walked deep into the cave. Lydia followed, walking right by him. But the two of them stopped at the same time.

Because they thought they saw something moving in that place filled with the glowing light.

The thing that was giving off the glow was all the rocks around them. They were covered with a thin line of mold, and it looked like that was what was giving off the faint glow.

There was a shallow pool in the middle of the cave that was surrounded by the rocky walls, and water drops fell down from the ceiling to make circular waves

on the pool's surface below, making the light flicker in its reflection. The whiteish-blue light that filled that space gave the illusion like they were at the bottom of the sea.

There was a figure that stood on the pool; it was a young girl. The blueish white light wrapped around the girl's hair and it was so long that it covered her body and dragged along the floor if she were to walk.

"A merrow..."

Edgar heard Lydia's whisper and turned to look at the girl curiously.

"A merrow? But she has legs."

"It isn't any trouble for them to shift to human form."

"But, even I can see her, and she looks human to me."

"She's showing herself so even you can see her. And besides, are you saying that a human would be trapped alive in this place just till now?"

Edgar looked around them and made sure they were in a place without any secret passages.

"That seems to be impossible."

"At least this place doesn't have any of the mechanical contraptions that you were imagining."

"And so you're saying I should surrender? But I can't see how the merrows would be able to tell me apart from the real Lord Blue Knight."

He's right, even the merrows wouldn't be able to tell if the one who made it to this location was in fact carrying the blood of the Earl family in him. That's why there should be some sort of condition to determine if that person has the qualifications of a Earl.

Most likely, that condition was hidden somewhere in the contract made between the Blue Knight Earl and the merrows. Then that means the one who would be determined as the inheriter should know about fairies, had solved the mysterious riddle, as well as had possession of the entrance key, and understood the meaning behind the [Exchange a star for the merrow's star.]

In that sense, it was just as Edgar thought; the one who met the conditions would gain possession of the sword. It was the same as there being a contraption.

“It is a honor to welcome you,” said the merrow. “So, who is the one I shall hand it to?”

“Where is it?” asked Edgar.

“Can you not see it?”

Lydia squinted her eyes to search.

The light swayed and flickered.

Where is the sword?

A blueish-white image loomed in the shade of one of the rocks.

Edgar saw it too. He moved before she did.

“Lydia, it’s just the shadow.”

But she realized what it was from Nico’s voice.

It was just the glowing image made by the light reflecting off of the sword. Then the real sword was.

Lydia bolted-to the opposite direction of where Edgar was heading.

Kneeling down at the edge of the pool, she plunged her arm into the water.

The light was disrupted and made the glowing sword image by the rock disappear.

“.....What?”

By the time Edgar turned around, Lydia had pulled the shining silver blade out of the water.

It was Lord Blue Knight’s sword.

There wasn’t a speak of rust on it; it was a double-edged blade that shined as if it was forged just now. There was one blue gemstone embedded in it.

Lydia gripped its hilt and turned back to face Edgar.

“Don’t move.”

To Lydia’s serious demeanor, he looked back at her showing no resistance.

“...I already know. That you have to trade a human sould with this sword.”

Edgar showed no signs of surprise and only smiled lonesomely.

“Alright. It looks like I’ve lost. You can do as you please.”

Responded with such quick surrender, Lydia grew hesitated. She had to go with the flow of the moment in order to be able to cut him. If he didn’t come after her to take away the sword, then she would never be able to throw such a thing

around.

“Raven, don’t stick your hand into this.”

On top of that, he even stopped Raven who was inching little by little to find an opportunity.

But he was fully aware of Lydia’s hesitation.



He knew perfectly well of her worry that she never handled a sword before and was scared to harm someone.

That’s why even if Lydia thought he seemed timid, she couldn’t bring herself to move.

Nico tugged her sleeve to instigate her.

“Don’t hesitate over this, Lydia. If you don’t kill him, he’ll kill you. Or do you plan to join him in becoming pray of the merrows?”

Nico was right.

[Exchange a star for the merrow's star. Or else the merrows will sing their song of lament.]

If they didn't hand over the promised item to the merrows here, then the merrows will sing their song. That meant everyone here would be dragged into the sea.

Slowly, Edgar stepped over to her.

"I said don't move!"

"If I'm not close you can't cut me."

"He's right, that man was planning to kill you, Lydia!"

Edgar paid no heed and continued to close up on her.

"Were you really planning to kill me?"

"Are you frightened? You're trembling."

"Was it a lie when you said you wouldn't? You said that you would save my father. Was that a lie too?"

"That's wasn't a lie."

You big liar. Even as she thought that, Lydia was still hesitating.

"Tell me, was there any truth in any of your words?"

"What's the use of knowing that?"

"Because, you protected me all this time. I don't want to think all of that was a lie. After losing Ermine, I thought that I had shared even a little of the same pain as the both of you. That's why I thought you would understand my feelings of wanting to save my father....."

Of course, saying such a thing now was pointless.

Edgar made a wry face, either because he was irritated or befuddled by her.

"Why are you hesitating? Wouldn't the man who tried to kill you deserve to die. Even if you cut me, no one will blame you."

"Lydia, ahh, geesh, what are you doing!" said Nico impatiently.

".....What am I suppose to do!"

Most likely, there was no way Lydia was ever going to be able to harm Edgar with a sword.

Edgar, who had been staring at her steadily, suddenly chuckled like he couldn't believe what he was seeing.

“Even if it was a criminal like me, you’re still scared of cutting me with that sword? Then, let’s do this.”

He took a hold of Lydia and grabbed the sword out of her hand before she knew it.

He narrowed his eyes and for some reason looked at the sword sadly.

“You’re too soft-hearted, Lydia. Even though there are villains in the world who can be more sadistic and cold-blooded than you can imagine.”

He slowly turned the sword. Lydia’s body was frozen and she couldn’t move it.

However, Edgar abruptly changed the course of the sword. He placed the blade against the palm of his hand.

And he slid it through.

“Eh.....”

Blood trickled from his palm and ran down the blade. And dripping down to hit the ground.

Standing in front of the dazed Lydia, he gave her a faint, tired smile.

“I wonder why. I can’t seem to make a good lie to you.” He turned to face the other dazed young man standing in the cave. “Raven, I’m sorry.”

“Lord Edgar.....”

They felt the rumbling sound of violent, crashing waves approaching them. And then, from the pool surrounded by the rocks, water erupted from up into the air.

In no time, the water became a massive wave and crashed into them.

Lydia clamped her eyes shut from the rush of the waves which was an amount that could fill the cave in seconds.

But she never felt her body being engulfed by the water; she only heard the sound of the passing sound of the waves, and then it was gone.

When she opened her eyes, the massive wave was no where in sight, and the pool was just a pool, and the sword lay on the ground by Lydia’s feet.

Only Edgar was no where in sight.

The merrow slowly walked over to her.

She picked up the sword and held it out to Lydia.

“The one who was not harmed by the sword. Please accept this sword.”

“.....Is this alright? Didn't all of you protect this sword for the Earl family's descendant all this time?”

“The Earl has passed away. Long ago, by the sea so far that we were unable to save him.”

“Are you saying that the Earl family line has perished?”

“We are not sure. Only that from that time, however long time has passed, since no one appeared who could correctly solve the riddle, so that is what it must mean. All of the inheritors of the Earl family have gone back and forth between the fairy world and no longer than one hundred years would pass during their absence. But if there are no more alive in the Earl family, we believed that only a fairy doctor would be able to make it to here. And you being here must mean you are one.”

“So all of you were waiting for a fairy doctor?”

The young female merrow nodded sadly.

“The one to allow our merrow clan to live in this sea was the Earl. The Earl was the one who bridged the gap between humans and us so that we all could live in peace. But after the Earl had left, and time had passed, the blood in the island people has faded, and there is once again a disparity between us. To protect the sword, we have made the waters around the island constantly stirred, but the only ones we toss into the sea are thieves; we originally had been sending signals between the island residents so that no one on the island or visitors who came would be harmed. But as time went on, that tradition has been forgotten, and now we are unable to tell the difference of the ships that approach the island if-they are thieves or fishermen or merchants.”

“And that's why this island is secluded.”

“The number of merrows have dropped as well. There were even quite of number of us that have despaired of the living here and returned to our homesea. But the most of us could not bare to break the promise between the Earl.”

The female merrow took Lydia's hand and had her grip the sword.

“But now, we have fulfilled our promise. The sword belongs to the human world. This island, is also land of the humans. We will leave this place. Even if

the one to govern the human land is not the descendant of Lord Blue Knight from the fairy world, all will be fine. We wish to leave it in your hands now.”

Lydia’s gaze was pulled to the large sapphire that was embedded into the hilt.

And she noticed that there was no six-rayed light inside the sapphire.

The star sapphire, a noble blue-stoned sapphire crystal that looked as if it had a star taken from the night sky trapped inside it, was a rare gemstone that had a milky white light placed radially in the middle of the stone like the hub and spokes of a wheel. And yet, this sapphire, which had the sheen of fine silk, was missing the brilliant star. This wasn’t the star sapphire, but just an ordinary sapphire.

“.....The star is missing.”

“That should be with the Earl. The tradition in the Earl family made it so that whenever they left the sword with us, they would take out just the star in the sapphire and engrain it somewhere on their body. If there was no inheritor that had that star passed down to them, then there is no way to return the star to the gemstone.”

[Exchange a star with the merrow’s star.]

So that’s what that meant. That was originally meant about the light inside the sapphire that the Earl’s descendant should have been passed on. The Blue Knight Earl’s sword attained the star not by a human soul but the [star] that the Earl had taken out of it and then returning it back to the stone. But the true Earl hasn’t returned. And the merrows would continue to be binded to their promise. That’s why they were only left to alter the interpretation.

The thing that shines bright like a star in the land of the merrows are the souls of the dead. The merrows decided that exchanging with that would fulfill their promise.

Then, that means.....

Lydia felt like she had nearly onto something important, but unable to fully grasp it, continued to search for it in her head.

But her thought was cut short by the noisy sound of something from the direction of the entranceway.

“Ms Carlton, Huxley and his brothers are coming.”

They must have crossed over a plank they took out from the wine cellar and placed over the part of the missing bridge. And now after they all crossed it, the Gossam brothers came pushing through the entranceway.

The merrow quickly vanished.

Raven stood ready in front of the entranceway. She wondered why since Edgar wasn't here anymore.

His precious master has been taken away by the merrows. Why doesn't he take revenge on Lydia who was the cause of that.

But unlike what she thought, he looked as if he thought he needed to protect Lydia who Edgar was unable to cut with the sword.

Huxley and his brothers stopped in front of Raven. However, he opened his mouth bravely.

"Hey, hand over the sword. Or else your father will be....."

Just then, Nico sudden appeared out of no where.

He jumped on top of Huxley's head with ease. And stomped with all his might on his hat.

"Nico, that's dangerous!"

"Hey, chaps, you're late! Over here, get them!"

A high-pitched roar erupted from behind Huxley and his brothers.

It was an army of brownies. They crowded together and swarmed over to their direction.

Lydia spotted some of the faces that she helped at the landlord's house.

"Make them all go bald!" shouted Nico, stirring them on as he swunged his tail around with the ends of it burnt.

The tiny faeries raced on their feet, along with those that rod on top of mice, and those that hanged from bats as they attacked the Gossam brothers.

Climbling up their feet, they started to bite them all over and pull out their hairs.

Most likely, the men weren't able to see the faeries. They had no idea what was going on, yet Huxley and his men all gave out terrified screams.

"Father, this way!"

Lydia called her father, who had faeries climbing up him but not getting

attacked, over away from the ruckus.

“Lydia, thank goodness.....you were safe.”

After they hugged each other tight, happy over their reunion, Lydia made her decision.

The feeling of wanting to protect your loved ones, and the feeling of hesitating because of that, and the sad feelings of when you couldn't protect, was all the same for everyone.

Lydia was lucky not to have lost anything. But she couldn't let things end like this.

She stepped out of her father's arms, and walked over to Raven who stood not knowing what was going on and what to do.

“There's one thing I want to know. Do you remember what was written on the silver key that Edgar had?”

“Only a little.”

“It didn't exactly say that the merrows would hand over the sword in exchange with a human soul, did it?”

“Yes. At the very end, it only said that [The one who gains the sword must test the sword. The merrows will take the blood that was run to the sea.]”

There was no mistake that the [Exchange a star with the merrow's star] written on the gold coin, and that inscription written on the silver plate, was pointing at the important part of the promise between the Blue Knight Earl and the merrows. By tying the two together, you could interpret it as scarifying a human soul to the merrows would gain you the sword.

However, if the star meant the light inside the sapphire, then that had nothing to do with shedding blood with the sword-there was a different meaning.

That was where Lydia was caught in a bind.

“Can I leave this situation to you?”

Confused, Raven tilted his head.

Lydia looked over to check what was happening with Huxley and his brothers, but they had lost the fight and were close to rages thanks to the faeries.

“It looks like they aren't left with any more spirit or strength to fight, but still be careful, and get out of here with my father.”

“Miss Carlton, but what about you?”

“There may be nothing I can do. But I’m still going to try what I can.”

And she faced her father who looked at her worryingly.

“Father, I’m a fairy doctor, so,”

“I know. You be careful.”

Gripping tight onto the sword, Lydia walked over to the shining mold rock where the merrow had just been standing.

“Nico, would you please.”

“Lydia, don’t say that you’re planning on talking with the merrows.....”

Nico, who came over to her, made a furrow in his brows, and twitched his whiskers irritatingly.

“Isn’t this pool connected to the merrow’s sea? Since you’re a fairy, you’re able to guide me through the fairy’s path.”

“Yeah, well..., but still, if you fail in negotiating with them and anger the merrows in their waters, then you’ll drown at the bottom of the sea in no time.”

“I know that.”

“Is it for that aristocrat?”

“He didn’t lie to me.”

“That was just him on a change of whim. Just before the last moment, he was going to kill you for sure, and he’s bound to be regretting that he didn’t kill you right now. Of course if he’s still in a state where he could regret.”

“Nico, if you’re not going to guide me, then I’ll go by myself.”

“Oh, geesh, alright!”

Nico stretched out his tail towards Lydia. “Hang on tight.”

Chapter 7 - The star is the mark of the Earl

Diving into the pool, that at one glance looked shallow, Lydia and Nico sank into the depths of the deep sea.

Even if it looked like the sea, they were in faerie territory. It was a separate realm, cut off from the waters at the bottom of the sea and so they could breathe fine and not worry about drowning. The water wasn't freezing cold and didn't soak her clothes wet.

She only felt the slight sensation of floating and the constant pressure around her body like she was walking in water.

A school of blue fish passed in front of them. Lydia followed after Nico as she was headed towards a faintly glowing light in the distance in front of them.

It was the town of the merrows.

There were buildings that looked like houses lined atop a hill, decorated with seashells and seaweeds. There was a bright shining light above them-it could be the fishermen's souls that the merrows have collected.

"Look, it's a human."

"It's walking around freely."

"So that must mean it isn't ours."

"And what's that small creature it has with it."

"It looks like a faerie."

"Tsk, hey, we aren't on exhibition, you know," mumbled Nico, irritated.

She could tell that a number of merrows were sneaking glances at them from the rocks. The female merrows had the upper body exactly like a human, actually a much more attractive one than a human, with a lower half of the body like a fin of a fish covered in scales, which was just like they were believed to look like in fairytales; but the male merrow's face and arms were covered with scales and they had fins on their heads and backs. The males looked much more like a fish's.

Stared at from the gathering crowd of merrows, Lydia stopped. "Excuse me,

wasn't there a human that was just brought here? Has anyone seen him?"

"If their soul hasn't been taken out yet, then they'd be taken to the ranch."

She headed to the direction of where one of them pointed to.

It wasn't long before a hill covered with green seaweed appeared in view.

Schools of fishes circled around inside of the ranch. Lydia immediately spotted a blond-haired figure gazing dazedly at them.

"Edgar! Thank goodness, they hadn't taken your soul out yet."

He turned to look at Lydia as she rushed over to him like he couldn't believe what he was seeing.

"I can't believe you would appear in my dreams. So you really were mad at me?"

"This isn't a dream."

"No, it is a dream. Because, I'm standing at the bottom of the sea quietly watching the fish swim by me. On top of that, no matter how hard I pinch myself, it doesn't hurt."

"Well, yes, this situation may look to you as if you're in a dream. But, it's not like I'm having a dream right now."

Out of the blue, Edgar pinched Lydia's cheek.

"Ouch! That hurts, what are you doing!"

"You're right. What's going on?"

"Oh, it doesn't matter! Anyway, you're coming with me. I'll let you know that I'm here to save you!"

Lydia tugged hard on his sleeve. But he stood still and didn't move from where he was.

"Save me? But even if I'm saved, there's no hope for me. Ermine has died, and I didn't have enough power to save Raven."

"Raven must still need you."

"If he were to be taken back to Prince, they would only use the spirit in him that obeys to me for evil purposes."

"Then you just have to not be captured."

"Didn't I tell you it's useless? Even all this time, I was under the impression that we were escaping his clutches, but he was only letting us roam free. And even

you, I used a dirty trick on you, so there's no reason for you to save me."

So you'd admit you were tricking me.

Lydia felt a bitter disappointment, but also thought that if that was the case, then she really couldn't let him die.

"If you die like this, then I will never forgive you. Because, you didn't cut yourself from guilt towards me.It was because you realized there was no star in the sword's sapphire, wasn't it? If there wasn't any star sapphire, then it wouldn't serve as proof of you as Earl. You realized that all your efforts were useless, and so you just gave up all hope."

Edgar looked at Lydia with dark, grave eyes, and made a smile as he sighed.

"You're exactly right. But still....."

"I'm going to have you regret with all your heart that you tried to kill me. You're going to see that when you sacrifice other people with that arrogant attitude of yours, that all the bad things you've done will come back to you.So, I'll give you what you would have never gotten if you were to have cut me at that time."

"....."

"I can't promise it will go well. But if it does, then you better repent with all your heart!"

Taking another tug at his sleeve as he still looked shockingly at her in disbelief, he still stumbled after her.

"Oi, now, we can't have you release them as you please."

A merrow who seemed to be the caretaker of the ranch appeared, and stopped Lydia.

"I'm not doing this for a simple reason. I need to negotiate about him, so please tell me who's in charge of taking care of this Earl's sword."

Being showed the sword she held out roughly in front of him, the caretaker shrugged his shoulders, and pointed to a house on top of the hill.

"It's a pity for the humans. If all the females were this head-strong, then they'd rather choose to have their souls become lights."

She watched as the merrow looked pitifully at Edgar, who let his gaze roll off him with a sour smile, and she marched out of the ranch angrily.

“Well, pardon me for being head-strong.”

“I actually adore that part about you where you say things straight.”

“I can’t promise you that we’ll be alright even if you try to flatter me.”

“You have to be joking, Lydia, we still have time to turn back,” whispered Nico as he jumped up onto Lydia’s shoulder.

When he figured she wasn’t going to change her mind, he turned to face Edgar.

“Oi, you brute, even if you live through this, don’t think you’re saved. I won’t be satisfied until I have the brownies pull out every strand on your blond head.”

“Nico, that’s useless. I had Edgar help me make a guide way for them. They wouldn’t do something like that against someone they owe.”

“Whaaat? Are you saying he gave a hand in that? Bloody heeeell! Then what’s the point of me coming here to save him! There’s no reason for me to be here!”

“I feel sorry about what I did, Nico. Until the fur on your tail grows back, I’ll buy you a present of a long-tailed coat that will hide your tail for you.”

Perhaps because he thought he was in a dream, Edgar accepted the fact that he could talk with Nico without hesitation.

“.....Are you serious?”

Feeling a strong attraction to the sound of a coat, Nico softened his attitude.

“Yes, I promise. Of course only if we’re able to return.”

After they reached the top of the hill, and passed through the gate covered with starfishes, they were met with a jellyfish curtain overlapping on top of the other in a lacelike pattern.

From the other side of it, a merrow appeared.

It was the young female that they met at the Blue Knight Earl’s castle.

She took a look at both Lydia and Edgar, and let out a troubled sigh.

“Fairy doctor, what is the meaning of this?”

“Are you in charge here?”

“No, my father.”

“I would like to meet him.”

“.....Please follow me.”

They were lead into the room.

There were no ceilings in the merrow houses. There were hardly any walls as well; only rocks, and pillars and arches made of marine animal bones lined up next to each other, and separated by seaweeds and seashell curtains.

The merrow that was her father was in a room that had a particularly beautiful pillar decorated with pearl oyster shells.

“Lydia, are you sure you’re alright? He looks like a stubborn merrow,” whispered Nico.

“Hmm, who knows.”

Lydia showed her respect by doing a curtsy. Edgar just stood looking curiously at the stocky merrow, and Lydia didn’t couldn’t care less about his behavior.

“My name is Lydia Carlton, and I am a fairy doctor.”

“What is your purpose.”

“I’ve come to retrieve the ‘merrow’s star’,” and saying that, she held up the sword and the sapphire.

“The earl has it. You should have heard that if the Earl has not returned, then we cannot put the star in the sapphire.”

“Is there anything else you can do? If this sapphire was once called the ‘merrow’s star’, then didn’t that mean your people had once put a star in it?”

“That’s right. As sign of the bond between the King and Lord Blue Knight, our ancestor who was the lord’s servant put in a star in front of them. But just because of that happening in the past, are you saying to put in a star again? We cannot. Because, there is no Earl.”

“He is the Earl. He obtained the gold and silver key and solved the riddle and made it to the hidden location of the sword. Your merrows should have promised to accept a new Earl who had fulfilled the conditions of the promise made with the Earl in the past.”

Edgar turned to stare at Lydia in surprise, but he didn’t open his mouth.

“However, he has not fulfilled the last condition. Blood was shed by the sword.” That was the problem.

“Why did you put the condition of testing the sword there? That was not the original condition, but a means to protect the Earl’s heir from all possible

conspiracies, wasn't it?"

The merrow grew silent, so Lydia carefully chose her words and continued.

"There might be the possibility of someone taking the advantage of the one who was descended from the Earl. There could be the chance of someone deceiving and accompanying him to get their hands on the gemstone. But this is a sword made of magic. It cannot harm the Earl's heir and his trusted accomplices. Am I wrong?"

".....You are completely correct. Daughter from the Earth land. We've had all the ones who came to claim sword and call themselves to be the Earl to test the sword. If there were those who shed blood by the sword, then it was also our duty to remove them."

If he was the true Earl, then he wouldn't misinterpret the meaning of exchanging with a star. There would be no way that he would bring someone as sacrifice, and the only ones he should be bringing along only the ones he trusted.

But if there was the possibility of someone who shed their blood there, then that proves that there was someone with ill intent who found their way into the group. If the true Earl was in that group, then it was all the more important for the merrows to protect the Earl and remove those with wicked aims.

"Then relinquishing the sword in exchange with the soul of the one who shed blood would mean you and your merrows have twisted your promise with the Earl."

"We have acted according to the promise. If you say not, then daughter of the earth, that would mean we would have to retrieve the sword you have in your hand and drag everyone of the souls that were present in that cave to the sea."

Aaah, maybe it was foolish of me to think I could haggle a deal with merrows. This is bad, I need to think of something, panicked Lydia and tried to mull over a plan in her head.

"That's....., that shouldn't have been your merrow's original purpose. It will be a misfortune for your merrows and for the island people to continue to wait forever for the Earl's descendant who could have died out."

Lydia gulped down the anxiety that was building up in her throat. She had to

somehow bring them to consent to their idea.

“So, I would like to ask you to accept him as your new Earl.”

The merrow glanced over to Edgar with openly irritated eyes.

“You’re saying we should accept a thief?”

“Yes, he may be a thief and treat others like they were nothing, but the most important and only good quality about him is that he never abandons his duty of a nobleman.”

“‘Only good factor’ is a little rude, you know.”

Not paying any attention to Edgar, Lydia continued on.

“Isn’t that the duty that your merrows wish from the human fief lord? He will take all the responsibilities, including for your merrows to be able to continue living on this island.”

“Hold on just a moment, Lydia.”

“You wouldn’t say you can’t do it, can you. You’re a peer. What is the big deal of having faeries live on your fief.”

“Well, yes. But just having the merrow’s acceptance won’t make me the lord.”

“So all we need is the star in the sapphire,”

“If you say you need the star that much, then I would like to ask you to understand our situation. Fairy doctor.”

“Of course, I,”

“Will you accept our duty to act upon what was promised with the Blue Knight Earl?”

“.....Yes.”

“Lydia, no!” shouted Nico all of a sudden.

It was a bargain trap set by the merrow. It was already too late when Lydia realized that.

She looked down to see there had been water creeping up around Lydia’s feet.

“We may as well accept your offer. You shall have the star. However, in exchange with you. A fairy doctor’s soul is much more valuable than a mere human soul.”

What was important for the merrows was that they didn’t break the promise with the Earl. Lydia intended to take advantage of that and tried to force them

to accept Edgar as earl, but they had pulled the rug out from her feet.

It looks like the merrows were stubbornly sticking with the idea that the thing that would be traded with the gemstone star would have to be a human soul.

Even if there was a merit to make Edgar earl, they're implying that there's no promise of presenting a new star.

"Wait," said Edgar and stood in front of Lydia. "The true meaning of the contract that you all have made was to accept the star from the earl's heir and engrain it into the sapphire, wasn't it? Then you should trade with my star."

Lydia was surprised and panicked at what he was suddenly saying.

"Y-You don't have any star."

"I do, right here."

Edgar stuck out his tongue like a child, and showed them the branded cross on it.

It looked too painful to the eyes to be called a star, and Lydia couldn't bare to look at it.

"It may not be the Blue Knight Earl's star, but the point is keeping the honor of not breaking the promise, right? Then, everything's fine as long as we respect the formalities. This way, we don't have to change the interpretation, and your merrows would be able to act exactly as the promise."

"What an interesting way of thinking."

"Just as Lydia said in the beginning, I will protect your merrows right to live on the island. Of course, that's if you would accept me."

The way Edgar spoke in such a firm and resolute attitude made him resemble the Lord Blue Knight who must have took a stand against the merrows at one time.

The merrow looked like he was mulling it over, but that was only for just a moment.

The muddy water that had been sinking Lydia's feet and lower legs, quickly retreated.

"Hmm, a tetra star. Well, it should do. The star sapphire is a penta star, but there is no rule that the 'merrow's star' has to be that."

A wind, no, a heave of the sea swirled up around Lydia and Edgar.

"I ask of the new Blue Knight Earl to not forget that the merrows have become your subjects."

"Here comes the wave," butted in Nico, clinging onto Lydia's skirt. At that same time, Edgar clutched Lydia into his chest.

"W-What are you doing!"

"It looks like it's going to get dangerous."

"I'm fine."

"No, for me."

"Huh?"

"Doesn't it seem safer if I hang onto you?"

".....Hang on? This is more like we're in an embrace!"

"I also wanted to express my feelings of gratitude. For laying your life on the line to save me."

"Don't get this wrong. I only did my job.And besides, my defenses were weak and I was taken advantage of."

He pressed her tight to him. They were in a position where she was left with placing her cheek against his shoulder, but Lydia suddenly felt her body relax and tears watered her eyes.

She really did think she wasn't going to make it.

"That part about you is so,"

She couldn't heard everything Edgar was saying, as the both of them, plus one animal was gulped up by the violent tide.

"Young lady,young lady, are you all right?"

Lydia's body was shaken and she gradually opened her eyes.

"Oh, thank goodness, you're awake."

There were two male strangers peering down at her. Lydia was laid down in a room of someone's house.

"You were found collapsed on the shore. Although, we were the ones to find you, the owner of this house says they've never seen you, and you don't seem to be a resident of this island, so does that mean you're Miss. Lydia Carlton?"

Lydia still wasn't fully awake, but nodded idly.

"Yes, ...I am. Who are you....?"

"We're the police of this province. We were given the report from the London city police of the possibility of you being kidnapped and confined on this Mannor Island, so we've came to investigate."

"It seems that two days ago, your father, Mr. Carlton, filed a report."

So her father had notified the police before he headed here with the Gossam brothers.

Lydia sat up in a hurry. Nico, who was right beside her, let out a meow.

Where's Edgar?

"By the way, we'd like to ask about the man who was also found collapsed on the shore with you," said the policeman, who turned around to the direction of the open door of the next room, and Lydia was drawn to look that way as well, and she saw Edgar laying on the bed with his eyes closed.

The policeman approached the doorway, and eyed Edgar suspiciously.

"He shares the same description as the thief who broke into the Gossam residence and said to have kidnapped you."

"Uh, no, that's....."

While Lydia was scrambling to speak, one of the policeman noticed the sword that was laid up against the wall near the fireplace.

If the Blue Knight Earl's sword was left placed drawn and naked like that in a simple house like this, it appeared like a much more pompous and boastful sword than it did it when it was in the cave that seemed disconnected from reality.

"That sure is an anachronistic sword for this time. Were you perhaps threatened by this dangerous weapon and him...."

"Don't touch it."

Edgar sat up in a tired, slow manner in the next room.

"That's my sword."

The policeman must have been taken aback by his sharp presence and decided to put it back in its place. But he recovered and turned to ask him.

"You've woken as well. Excuse me, but may I ask your name?"

“My lord!”

Just then, the front door slammed open.

The one who came busting in was the innkeeper, or Mr. Tomkins, the Ashenbert family butler.

The butler stopped when he saw Edgar, and quickly stood straight, nodded to greet the two policemen, and briskly walked over to his new master and knelt down in front of him.



“It is my pleasure to welcome you back, my lord.”

So many of the butlers in his family must have waiting for the day to be able to say that. Because, he looked that emotional.

“Please excuse for being in such casual wear. The owner of this house informed me you were here, but it was so sudden, I rushed here as quick as I could when I

heard that the lord of the house had returned alive.”

“It’s alright, don’t fret over it.”

“Hold on just a moment.So that means, this gentleman is,” questioned the policeman, still with a suspicious face.

“This gentleman is the the Earl Ashenbert, lord of this Mannor Island,” replied Tomkins.

“Is that certain? I have never heard that the lord was living on this island.”

“Yes, since he has been away for a long time.”

“Tomkins, could you fetch me a glass of water,” ordered Edgar, as if he didn’t care about the police’s questioning and gave an order to the butler as if that was usual. Of course, he must be used to ordering people around.

“Yes, immediately,” replied the butler, and happily headed to the kitchen.

“Then, my lord, could you explain how you came to meet Ms. Carlton, and how you both ended up on the shore? A report was filed that she had been kidnapped.”

“Uh, this man just saved my life!” She blurted that out without thinking why she would have to cover up for a criminal like him.

But in the end, Lydia made the decision by herself to come along with Edgar. Without realizing that he was hiding a terrifying plan for her. And even after she found out, she couldn’t run away.

To top it off, she went after him to the merrow’s dwellings to save him, and so she didn’t have any intention of handing him over to the police now.

“The one who tried to kidnap me was the eight sibling brothers of the Gossam family, and I think they are still laying unconscious underground the castle. Please put them under arrest.”

“Eight men are passed out in an underground room? My lord, were you the one to bravely face such a number?”

Edgar shook his head and looked at Lydia like he also wanted to know the answer to that.

“Umm,that would be my friends.”

“If it’s not too much trouble, we’d like to ask them some questions.”

Lydia didn’t know how to answer that. If she told them they were faeries, then

they're bound to laugh at her.

Seeing Lydia like that, Edgar figured it out and replied to them instead.

"That would be impossible. Since they're faeries."

And he smiled towards Lydia. Like friends sharing the same secret.

The policeman looked at the both of them dubiously.

There was another noisy commotion by the doorway.

The one who came scrambling in was Carlton. Raven was also with him.

"Father!"

Lydia ran over to her father and jumped up into his arms.

As the both of them were overjoyed in their safe reunion, she also managed to sneak a peek out of the corner of her eye of Edgar and Raven shaking their hands tightly.

She knew that for the both of them, this wasn't an ending that they could wild with joy over. The sorrow of losing Ermine must be great.

But Lydia managed not to be killed by Edgar. Perhaps Ermine's death was able to teach Edgar the feelings of Lydia who desperately wanted to save her father. That's why, most likely, the reason why Edgar didn't cut Lydia but himself, was not only because he despaired over there not being a star in the sword.

Maybe, everything wasn't a lie.

Like when he said he couldn't lie like his usual self to Lydia as he cut himself with the sword.

Not wanting to hurt others as much as possible must have also been Edgar's true wish, and that's why he must have kept his promise that he'll help Lydia and her father. Or so she hoped.

"Oi, Lydia, go outside and look."

At Nico's voice, she finally stepped away from her father.

Carlton was stopped by the policeman who was eagerly waiting for the two of them to end their happy reuniting and bombarded him with questions. After Lydia listened as her father explained to him that both Raven and he tied up the Gossam brothers to the gatepost of the castle, she took a step outside of the house.

The view of the sea shore spread out in front of her.

Completely different from when they first arrived on the island, the waves were calmly washing up onto the shore.

She could spot a bunch of brownies rowing out a log like a ship onto the waves. She felt that they would surely be able to go back and forth between the mainland and island safely now like they had in the past.

Lydia watched Nico run down to them after he told her that he was going to see the brownies off, and she turned to step back into the house.

She picked up the Blue Knight Earl's sword that had been placed up against the wall near the fireplace, and looked to see that there was a crossed-shaped star that shined brightly in the middle of the sapphire.

"That was so magical. I'm still thinking that what went on was all a dream, yet this gemstone proves this is reality."

She didn't notice that Edgar was standing next to her.

If he stood so close to her like that, she remembered how they were in each other's arms just earlier, and her heart began to race for no reason.

For Edgar, that must have been just a part of the dream he was in, but for Lydia, it completely happened in reality.

"So, are you repenting even a little now?"

Even if it was just to reduce her embarrassment, she knew she said it in a way that wasn't cute at all.

"Yes. I've learned that if you're with someone soft-hearted, then you can't expect what could happen. I've found out that being with those kinds of people can make nothing go according to plan, and they somehow make you not feel right, and nearly kill you.

But Edgar wasn't cute at all in how he said that with that grin of his. It almost sounded to her like he was trying to pick a fight.

"Wait just a minute, are you making fun of me by saying I'm gullible and easily taken advantage of?"

"No, no. I'm really grateful. Plus, I'd like to think there was something special between us. It seems like you could never be able to desert me."

He gave Lydia a seductive look which made her stagger back even more.

"Ah....., didn't I tell you to not to get the wrong idea."

“But, you know, a girl wouldn’t normally go after and save the man who was trying to kill her. But, even if I am wrong that that, I would be more than delighted.”

“I-I only wanted you to repent what you did! And yet, what is this attitude of yours after I went and saved you? And generally speaking, it’s a grave mistake to think about things in that they don’t go as planned and trying to make other people do as you say. It proves you’re insensitive.”

“Well, I don’t think I missed the right points to get you to trust me. If you didn’t know the truth, don’t you think you would have fallen in love with me?”

Even as she was made at his excessive smugness, she was nearly swayed by his graceful smile. Geesh, this man really is hopeless.

“You really are an arrogant scoundrel. It was wrong of me to think you had some good in you. Listen clearly, I will never ever forgive you, and don’t intend of forgiving you either!”

Lydia slipped past him to leave.

“Wait.”

“It’s too late to try to cover up...”

“Leave the sword here. Or I won’t be able to keep the promise with the merrows.”

Lydia couldn’t help but blow her temper.

She threw the sword at him roughly.

“You’d be happy as long as you have the sword, right, then here. This make my job finished. I never want to see your face again. Don’t ever show yourself in front of me again. Understand?”

Showing his surrender, Edgar put his hands up. That gesture seemed like it was still making fun of her, heating her anger even more.

Saying “Goodbye” as she panted, Lydia turned around to leave.

She pulled her father who was in deep conversation with the police and left the house.

“Father, let’s hurry home. I want to forget all the bad things that has happened!”

“She really does show her anger at you straight. It’s almost reinvigorating.”

He listened as Lydia complained loud enough for him to hear it, and picked up the sword as he narrowed like he was having a good time.

Raven stepped over to him.

“Lord Edgar, why did you purposely say something that would anger Miss Carlton?”

“I guess to hide my embarrassment.”

“Um-hm.”

“Because I told her that part about her is also cute as I was holding her.”

“That shouldn’t be that embarrassing. I believe you’ve said much more embarrassing things on a daily basis.”

“You don’t understand, Raven. It’s easy to say something if you don’t mean it.”

“.....then, wouldn’t it be pointless if she cuts ties with you.”

Edgar made an undaunted grin.

But he soiled his smile and quietly lowered his eyes into a disheartened expression.

“Shouldn’t I restrain myself for a while?”

Raven went silent with his usual face expressionless, but looking closer, there was a complex mix of confusion and sadness in his eyes.

Edgar placed his hand on his shoulder.

“Let’s go pick some flowers. To pay tribute to her.”

“Oh my god, what is the meaning of this-!”

Two weeks had passed since Lydia and her father made it back to Carlton’s house in London and enjoyed Easter together and when Lydia gripped the newspaper and let out a howling scream.

An article on the paper said that the heir to the Earl family had returned from a three hundred year absence and was allowed a royal meeting with the Queen and formally acknowledged by her highness of his position in court, but that wasn’t the problem.

The problem was the part about how the legendary Earl family scion who was said to have land in the fairy world, had hired a private fairy doctor.

The name that was printed was [Lydia Carlton].

“You have to be kidding me!”

Lydia dashed to see her father to complain to her father. But she froze when she saw Nico standing and making poses in front of a long mirror.

The cat was wearing a finely, tailored overcoat, long enough to hide his tail and proudly looked into the mirror as he satisfyingly fixed his fur.

“Nico, is that....”

“Aah, yes, it just arrived. I was surprised he actually remembered his promise.

He may be a scoundrel, but don’t you think he has good taste?”

She had a bad feeling.

“Lydia, a letter arrived for you.”

Just then, her father walked up to her.

Lydia’s mind was still distracted with Nico and she took the letter without much thought, but when she saw the grand crest in the sealing wax, her brows knit together as her bad feeling grew even worse.

She took her time as she nervously cut the seal.

[Dear Ms. Lydia Carlton,

We would like to inform you of this happy occasion about your hire as the private fairy doctor for the Earl family. In regards to your position, please pay a visit to the family town house as soon as possible. Furthermore, her royal highness is well aware of your involvement with the governing of the England fief estate in the fairy world as the Earl family’s private fairy doctor. We would like to inform you to please carefully consider to accept this offer in a timely manner as it will be best for your sake.

Sincerely,

Earl of Ibrazel

Edgar J.C. Ashenbert]

Which means she isn’t given the option of refusing.

Lydia trembled in rage as she balled her hands into tight fists.

“.....THAT LOUSY SCOUNDREL!”

Credits

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